

Ordinary Security: an ethnography of security practices and perspectives in Tel Aviv

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Declaration

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I declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Natalie Konopinski

Abstract

Anthropological approaches to contexts of violence and conflict often focus on the exceptional and extraordinary moment of violence or its memory, leaving little room for the ordinary ways in and through which much conflict is lived. How might conflict and violence permeate ordinary practice, daily events and experience? What about the mundane and anticipatory moments through which violence may be predicted, anticipated and waited upon? This thesis explores ordinary security perspectives and practices among Jewish-Israelis in Tel Aviv. It is based on 21 months of ethnographic fieldwork among security guards, civil guards and city residents between 2005 and 2007 as they do and discuss *bitachon* (security). Participant observation with street-level security staff, with civil guard patrols and within the critical activities and conversations at a local neighbourhood kiosk café all explore practices, perspectives and experiences of security.

This thesis argues that security practices that are often invoked as a precaution against danger and a provider of protection may paradoxically produce a sense of even more danger, uncertainty and insecurity. Security is not only about spectacular conflicts or strategic concepts but is also engaged with and experienced through mundane and ordinary social life. As well as claiming to protect the nation-state or managing strategic threats, security is also a kind of practice and emotion; an atmosphere, activity, and a feeling. Security is not only about extraordinary events and explosive situations, but also about a particular kind of waiting; an uncertain and boring anticipation of potential violence to come. It may be less about performance, legibility, or defence against dangerous others, than the identification of intimate and illegible populations, the playing out of racialized notions of danger and the ethno-nationalist uncertainties of the nation-state. In this context, collective anxieties and insecurities may be brought about not by the scale or magnitude of security threats, but by the perceived incapacity and protective impotence of the state. This thesis contributes to the anthropology of conflict and violence, the anthropology of Israel/Palestine and urban anthropology more generally. It points towards ways in which anthropology may meaningfully contribute to and enter dialogue with security studies, and argues in favour of an ordinary approach to the analysis of conflict and security.

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Chapter one: Introduction

About four weeks after my arrival in Israel I was woken in the middle of the night by the electronic ping of a telephone text message. I was staying in Tel Aviv with Tali, an Israeli acquaintance I had met once back when we were eighteen, and who became my closest friend in town. The message was from Andy, an Edinburgh anthropologist up in the north of the country, checking I was not out that night because a club had just been attacked. As I discovered the next morning, a Palestinian suicide bomber had detonated in the midst of queuing clubbers at the entrance to the Stage club by Tel Aviv's beachside, killing four and wounding around thirty people. Security staff had stopped the bomber entering the building but failed to avert the inevitable explosion. At the time I was startled and nudged Tali awake to tell her the news. But it seemed such events were not so extraordinary or unsettling for Tali. "Oh I can't deal with this right now" she grumbled and then sighed, rolled over, and fell right back asleep.

During the months after the Stage club attack a couple of other suicide bombers hit Israeli towns, Jewish Israeli settlers left the Gaza strip, targeted killings in the West bank continued, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a massive stroke. About a year later a suicide bomber attacked a shawarma stand in Tel Aviv and Hamas were elected into power by Palestinians in Gaza. By the summer of 2006 Gaza was under Israeli military blockade and Israel was at war with Hizbullah in southern Lebanon – all in the name of security.

Yet with every strategic military operation and promise of security precisely the inverse – insecurity – seemed the familiar result. Israel, a state whose formation in 1948 rested on a demand for safety and security for the Jewish people through national self-determination after centuries of European persecution, vulnerability, and humiliation, paradoxically appears to produce even more danger and insecurity for its Jewish population. Twentieth century Zionism (Jewish nationalism) championed the mutual construction of the state and security. Yet the very creation of the State of Israel, perpetual military activity and prolonged conflicts and

hostilities with surrounding Arab states and Palestinian populations have produced the reverse, turning the Israeli population into a prime target and placing the Jewish people under threat of attack in the very place presumed “home”. Security seemed far from reality for Tel Avivians in the summer of 2006, under threat – however fantastic – of missile attack by Hizbullah, listening to politicians promise to protect the state, and watching rockets rain down across the north and fellow citizens huddling in bomb shelters on the nightly news. Moreover, with lingering disputes over rightful ownership of territory along the border with Lebanon and the once Syrian Golan Heights, continuing conflict surrounding Israeli activities in the West Bank, the blockade of Gaza, and the possibility of a Palestinian state, the perceptual and physical borders and boundaries of the Israeli state and Israeli citizens resemble fluid frontiers, neither stable nor secure. Security practices, often invoked as a precaution against danger and provider of protection may paradoxically produce even more danger, uncertainty and insecurity.

Bitachon (security) however, is not only about spectacular conflicts or theoretical concepts but is also engaged with and experienced through mundane and ordinary security practice and social life. It is mundane and ordinary experience as well as extraordinary and violent acts through which we so often conceptualise security concerns or view life in Israel/Palestine. Security is also experienced and played out through the ordinary, daily, street-level screening of bodies and bags by security staff – like those outside the Stage club – at the gates to public space and place in Tel Aviv. Security may also permeate the mundane movements of people across the city as they walk and travel to work, or to school, to a bus station, café, or shopping mall, approach a security check at the entrance and open their bags and bodies to the security guards’ suspicious gaze. *Bitachon* may also be banal.

Crucially security is about claims to protect the nation-state or manage strategic threats but it is also a kind of practice and an emotion; an atmosphere, activity and a feeling (Loader and Walker 2007). *Bitachon* also refers to a particular practice: the job and the action of securing people and place as well as all the caring, trusting, re-assuring emotions, connotations, and social relations of security. It inheres and

emerges as instrumental practice, as social interactions, feelings, anxieties, and senses. It is something people feel on a day to day level, experience, produce and play out through security guards' signs and senses for spotting a "suspect", through reading between safe citizens and dangerous others, through anxieties and anticipations of violence, through normalised actions, and through hopes and doubts surrounding the state's protective capabilities.

Thus security emerges as a mundane, practical, and emotional double-edged sword, always implying or reproducing a degree of insecurity and uncertainty. This thesis aims to explore such duplicitous and ordinary security processes as they unfold on the streets and at security gates in Tel Aviv. What is security? What does it feel like? What are security practices all about? Do they really do or provide security? And what might they tell us about the way security and conflict is experienced and lived out?

Three related issues – security may produce insecurity, security is mundane and ordinary, security as practice and emotion – flow through all three parts of the thesis. These are security as boredom, anticipation, and awaiting violence which may or may not arrive; security as ordinary activity and practices of surveillance and suspicion; and security as critical commitment and hope for a competent and protective state. The first part of the thesis asks, what does security feel like? And what is security waiting for? The second asks, what is security? And what does security do? And the third part of the thesis asks, what happens when violence or conflict arrives? What are people afraid of? Through an exploration of these issues in the context of street level security practices in Tel Aviv I hope to understand the ordinary ways in which conflict and violence may be normalised and lived out. Why does the idea of security and security practice appear so "normal" and yet so "necessary" to many Israelis – even in this geographical and liberal centre of the country – although it may go unnoticed, or is deemed useless and unnecessary, or has remained a hope or protective promise endlessly deferred? The point is not to explain security as an abstract concept or desire or political statement. It was not only American foreign policy and Israeli political leaders that expressed the importance of

“security” for Israelis and the State of Israel. Security, along with other socio-economic and political problems, is also stressed and practised by Israeli people as well as political rhetoric. The aim of this thesis is to look beyond Israel’s political and territorial claims to security and explore what security actually does, to follow ordinary security practices in order to better apprehend how security produces particular anticipations, anxieties, practices, perspectives, suspects and citizens. This thesis will examine security from the perspectives and practices of security staff who guard the security checks, as well as the people who pass through as they traverse the city.

The rest of this introduction will provide a brief historical context to Tel Aviv and my fieldwork in the city before exploring the ways in which this thesis relates to, departs from, and contributes to urban anthropology, security studies, anthropology in Israel, and anthropologies dealing with conflict and violence. It will introduce the themes of normalisation and the ordinary that run and resonate throughout the thesis. The introduction will end with an exploration and evocation of the context of fieldwork and methodology considerations that arose during research before providing an outline of the chapters to follow.

Tel Aviv history

Tel Aviv is inextricably intertwined with the Zionist project and the creation of modern Jewish urban space with the building of a uniquely Jewish nation-state. To the early Zionist ideologues and pre-state pioneers the Jewish state was imagined and conceived as a peculiarly modern endeavour, and Tel Aviv – meaning Hill of Spring, a biblical name given to the Hebrew translation of Theodore Herzl’s fictional Zionist utopia *Altneuland* (Old-New land) – as the quintessentially modern metropolis at its centre.¹ Tel Aviv, in historical narratives, town planning and popular Jewish Israeli perceptions, in art, literature and photography, in myth and materiality, functions as a synecdoche and site for the state (LeVine 2005, Mann 2006). As such the city’s

¹ In fact, as Mark LeVine (2005) points out, Herzl had imagined the settlement of Haifa as his urban utopia as Tel Aviv had yet to be built when he wrote *Altneuland* in 1902.

history and spaces are interlocked with imaginings and structures of the state, settlement, nationalism and conflict in Israel/Palestine. In this section I review the history and context of the city and the state in order to locate Tel Aviv in history and my fieldwork in the city. I present the construction of Tel Aviv, the Jewish community in Palestine and eventual State of Israel in tandem. Tel Aviv is often represented as a shallow, hedonistic, secular city, its residents disconnected and sheltered from the real social and security concerns of life in Israel. According to such popular portrayals, while citizens elsewhere deal with poverty or Palestinian rockets, Tel Avivians remain pre-occupied with celebrity, socialising, and sunbathing. Yet Tel Aviv, so often side-lined as a city and space apart from the conflict, socio-politically and culturally separate from the rest of Israel, emerges as a critical site or spaces where the modern ethno-national underpinnings of the state are produced and played out.

Tel Aviv was crowned as the “first Hebrew city”, a modern moniker that dominated discourse during its early years and still holds sway today. Its creation story, from a plot purchased in 1909 to urban metropolis, resonates with and reflects broader Zionist narratives of a city (and a nation) sprung from the sands (Arzaryahu 2007, LeVine 1999, 2005, Mann 2006). *Ahuzat Bayit* (Building Houses), a society made up of prominent members of Jaffa’s Jewish community (both Middle Eastern Jews and newer European immigrants) campaigned for the new suburb (which became Tel Aviv) to cope with Jaffa’s rapidly expanding Jewish population.

Avraham Soskin’s famous photograph (figure 1) of the sixty or so families who founded the new neighbourhood, standing huddled together in the sand dunes and drawing lots to divide the land became an iconic image of a Tel Aviv literally born out of the sands. The city is created ex nihilo on vacant, uncultivated, sandy land. The city sands were not only Tel Aviv’s foundation but also its flip-side; a desert wilderness to be conquered, colonised and reconstructed. As such Tel Aviv was a critical site for a very modern Zionist drive to secularise space and (re)produce a new Hebrew home, people, and place. “We will have one goal, for we all desire to conquer the desert sand and build a Hebrew city” proclaimed Tel Aviv’s charismatic

mayor Meir Dizengoff during celebrations for the city's twentieth anniversary in 1929 (Azaryahu 2007: 57). In Zionist rhetoric and mythology conquest referred to tropes of struggle and sacrifice, revival and rebirth, the appropriation and redemption of the land, the transformation of wild and empty space into a modern, developed, Jewish place. "We will preserve the cleanliness and sanitation...(It will be) an organised...modern city" explained a promotional pamphlet produced by the *Ahuzat Bayit* society (Shchori 1990: 33). Tel Aviv took on the Zionist ethos of "pioneering"; the city was to be both the vision and the vehicle of modernity, the Zionist movement and a new Jewish nation.



Figure 1. Tel Aviv land lottery. Avraham Soskin: April 1909.

The city, like the Zionist quest for a Jewish state, represented a dual negation of all the passiveness and persecution of European Diaspora experience, plus the putative backwardness and primitiveness of Palestine and the surrounding Middle East (LeVine 2005, Mann 2006, Rabinowitz 1997, Yiftachel 2006). Tel Aviv was to be the antithesis of disempowerment and degeneration, "a decision against the creation of hundreds of years of the Diaspora" said Haim Bialik, one of the city's most distinguished writers (Yafeh 1980: 44). One of Zionism's key justifications was that life in the Diaspora was insecure and unhealthy and that the only solution for the ills and stagnation, pogroms and persecution of late 19th and early 20th century Diaspora experience was the establishment of a Jewish "National Home" and healthy, strong,

new Jewish people (LeVine 2005, Mann 2006, Segev 1986, Yiftachel 2006). Palestine became the locus of Jewish national survival-revival.

“We have come to the homeland to build and be built” went the popular pre-state song (Handelman 2004: 48), taken from the Book of Jeremiah and which became the “building and being built” motto on Tel Aviv’s municipal crest. “Every society...” writes Henri Lefebvre, “produces a space, its own space” (1991: 31). The process is mutually productive: society produces spaces, and these very spaces produce society. In pre-state Palestine, a Jewish city and society were the creation of the strong new Jew but the creators of that Jew as well.

The problem with this redemptive, reproductive solution was, of course, that other people already populated the Promised Land. Indeed, Soskin’s symbolic photograph is in fact a carefully angled perspective showing endless empty sands and cutting out the city of Jaffa to the south, the earlier Jewish suburbs of Neve Tsedek and Sharon, or the vast Arab orchards and fertile farmlands that lie just out of shot (Mann 2006). The land purchased in that picture was neither barren nor empty but on the contrary had a long history of mixed Arab-Jewish ownership and tenure, its eventual acquisition by *Ahusat Bayit* the result of contested negotiations with the Ottoman Jaffan municipality and local Arabs who occasionally worked and lived on the land (LeVine 2005). The Zionist movement however, began to present Palestine as largely vacant and its Arab populations as primitive and unproductive. This physical and discursive negation of Arab Jaffa and a modern “discourse of development” (LeVine 1995) exemplified the settling practices and Zionist portrayals of indigenous populations as unworthy renters of the land and Palestine as a tabula rasa awaiting rightful, productive, Jewish redemption, “a land without a people for a people without a land” as the well-known Zionist slogan put it (Mann 2006, Yiftachel 2006).

In the 1930s modern Zionism found a modernist partner in the Bauhaus architects fleeing Nazi Germany. In Tel Aviv they would erase, rationalise, and re-inscribe the landscape of Palestine. Tel Aviv’s brilliant white International Style buildings with their clean lines and functionalist aesthetic reflected the dynamic, no-frills austerity

of Zionist nation-building. As such Tel Aviv was created as a beacon of modernity, progress and Enlightenment in an environment supposedly lacking in both (LeVine 2005, Mann 2006).

Jaffa's borders were gradually erased and Arab lands and villages gradually effaced by Tel Aviv's expanding urban centre. With Jewish victory in the 1948 war Jaffa and Tel Aviv were officially united into one urban unit in 1950. Yet in popular perceptions Tel Aviv remains a separate, social, cultural, and Jewish sphere despite the municipal hyphen in the Tel Aviv-Yafo title (Azaryahu 2007, LeVine 2005). Still present yet nearly invisible and rarely noticed in central Tel Aviv stand the remaining and neglected structures of the Palestinian village of Sumayel (Khalidi 1992). The barely visible village is an absence of memory within the city (Mann 2006), a past that remains hidden behind the modernist veneer and selective interpretation of Tel Aviv history.

In 2003 this modern history re-emerged when Tel Aviv's Bauhaus "White city" achieved UNESCO World Heritage status. In fact the promotion of the "White City" as the symbol of Tel Aviv really only relates to a small section in the centre of the city and finds its neglected nemesis in the "black city", a critical stereotype coined by architect Sharon Rotbard to refer to Tel Aviv's reality; the city's southern neighbourhoods, Palestinian Arab citizens, *Mizrachi* Jews (Jews of Middle Eastern descent) and foreign workers – those relegated to the margins of the modernist myth. As such the "black city" serves as a reminder of the Tel Aviv that exists in the realm of lived experience (Azaryahu 2007). Palestinian Arabs live mostly in Jaffa, formally part of the city and yet still distinctly separate from Tel Aviv. And despite the foreign workers populating the south, or the Filipino carers pushing elderly Israelis in wheelchairs around the central "White City" streets, Tel Aviv retains and reproduces its image as a very Jewish metropolis.

According to this historical Zionist narrative Jews and Arabs were living in two different Palestine worlds: one Jewish, modern, and progressive, the other Arab, traditional, and primitive. If only Arabs could put aside their hostility to Jewish

settlement and comprehend the liberating and ameliorating thrust of Zionism, so early Israeli leaders argued, they would also see its benefits and share in reaping its rewards (LeVine 2005). The logic of separation re-emerged with the first *intifada* (1987) and formed the conceptual cornerstone of the now-defunct Oslo peace process during the 1990s under the Israeli banner “separation equals peace”. The territorial and physical separation of Israelis and Palestinians would, it was believed, supply a modicum of security for Israeli citizens and a measure of sovereignty for the Palestinians. Suicide bombings and military counterinsurgency operations from 1993, as well as the start of the al-Aksa *intifada* in September 2000 soon brought such hopes of security to an end. But the belief in the solution of separation remains as a core component of the unsuccessful Quartet backed Roadmap, the 2005 withdrawal of Jewish Israeli settlers from Gaza, and re-materialises in the so-called “separation barrier”: an Israeli-built concrete wall/wire fence running the length of the frontier between Israel and the West Bank.

This thesis takes ordinary security practices not as a contemporary instance of separation but as spaces where the mixture of persons, bodies, practices and the messiness, social relations, exclusions, inclusions and intimacies behind the modern myth may be seen. It addresses spaces where anxieties surrounding difference, danger, and demographics are produced and played out.

Urban anthropology

Cities and urban experience, from bulldozing in Jenin to car-jacking in Johannesburg, are increasingly described as dystopic sites of conflict and war (see for example Appadurai 1996, Bauman 2001, Schneider and Susser 2003, Sontag 2003); “battlegrounds” (Bauman 2001: 20) in which global politics enfolds and implodes as “ethnic unrest and urban warfare” (Appadurai 1996: 152-153); or deserted, divided “hyperghettos” (Wacquant 1994) and “strategic sites” (Graham 2004: 31) destroyed by “urbicide” (Shaw 2004).

On an historical note Stephen Graham (2004: 1) points to the mutual construction of cities and conflict (see also Virilio 2002). War and cities from the sacking of Troy to the War on Terror, not to mention the Russian levelling of Grozny in 1996, LA riots in 1992, or the siege of Sarajevo in the early 1990s Balkan wars, have a long and violent history. Yet such depictions take a very spectacular view of cities and conflict. What about other calmer, less extraordinary and violent urban experience?

Indeed, many contemporary anthropological approaches to cities revolve around various tropes or miserable motifs: the divided city, the contested city, conflict city, surveillance city, fortress city, and so on (see for example Low 1999, Davis 1990, Caldeira 1999, 2000, Lyon 2001). Teresa Caldeira (2000) describes processes of urban spatial segregation in Sao Paulo; “fortified enclaves”, giant walls, iron gates, and security guards behind which the wealthy work, rest, and play, abandoning the city streets to the urban poor. These “Closed condominiums” for recreation and residence promote a life of luxury, calm and protection from crime, a “city of walls” behind which the practise of social exclusion “is carefully and rigorously exercised” (Caldeira 1999: 91, 2001). Setha Low (1997, 2001) depicts similar gated communities within “fortress America” (Blakely and Snyder 1997) as exclusive cocoons filled with residents fleeing discourses of fear and urban violence, encoding fear, segregation and spatial separation into the suburban environment (Low 1997, 2001).

The Tel Aviv security check, I argue, presents less visible – except for those who are excluded – lines of separation across the cityscape. Practices of suspicion, uncertainty and street-level surveillance includes and confers a kind of solidarity and responsibility upon Jewish Israeli selves whose “others” – suicide bombers, criminals, Palestinian citizens – are sorted, screened, and no longer in sight. Tel Aviv does not appear a “divided city” or “fortress city” in which the affluent retreat into residential compounds and recreational complexes. There are no checkpoints marking the city limits, no high fences or barriers dividing sections of the city or bisecting its streets. Security staff do not guard every entrance, building or pavement. Instead, security checks and staff are in place to ensure “normal” everyday life may

continue. Rather than close off, curtail and cocoon – like gated communities – security checks on the city streets are seldom felt as control, maintaining movement and flows of citizens through the city. It does not seem segregated space. At least not for those who are protected. Tel Aviv remains open, lively, and full of fun. The beaches are busy (in summer at least), markets packed, cafes and bars and streets bustling with activity. It is a domesticated rather than divided city space. But this depends on one's point of view. For Jewish Israeli citizens and informants security is normal and normalised precisely because such supposedly protective security practices are designed to be misread, routine, and mundane. For my *Mizrachi* friends who find themselves questioned, Palestinian-Arab citizens who are stopped, and mostly Palestinian suspects who are taken to the police, such security checks hardly go unnoticed. In such contexts what might it mean to say that *bitachon* (security) is banal? Are security practices really “about” security at all?

This thesis takes a less dystopic and spectacular approach to the city than studies highlighting the city as segregated or inherently violent space, instead exploring the security practices that supposedly enable people to survive and carry on as “normal”. Practices, as many people put it, that are just part of “normal” life. What is at stake in the “security city”? What holds such “normal” (read normalising) security practices in place?

Security studies

Security, at its most fundamental is about “being and feeling safe from harm and danger” (Fierke 2007: 13, Booth 2005, Loader and Walker 2007, Terriff et al. 1999). Traditionally the province of positivist or realist security theory, the critical constructivist turn coming out of post-Cold War contexts has broadened and questioned a narrow state-centred security concept, pointing to the ways in which security is socially constituted and opening up space for anthropological analysis. While this thesis is not an exercise in security studies or IR method and interpretation

it is important to consider how ethnography may enter into discussion with other disciplines dealing with security. Here I explore some contemporary disputes in the analysis of security and ask how anthropology may meaningfully contribute to the debate.

The realist conception of security that dominated security studies from its inception after WW II, commanded security strategy throughout the Cold War, and which still holds sway in many corridors of power today (Booth 2005: 5), rests on the state as the principal object of security. Security in this sense relates to the threat or use of military force by distinct sovereign states. The security of individual subjects is subsumed by the state, sacrificing individual security and some measure of freedom in exchange for state protection (Fierke 2007, Sheehan 2005). Although realist theories have altered over the years, in general realists analyse the state as a value-maximising actor operating on a strategic stage in relation to other rational state actors.

With the splintering of Cold War alignments from 1989, new risks, processes of globalisation and the outbreak of “new wars” in contexts of instability or state collapse, new analytical responses and frameworks were required. Moving away from a narrow state-centred military definition, critical security scholars questioned the impartial credentials and language of theory itself and introduced an inherently political notion of security. The concept of human security uncoupled security from questions of war and conflict and widened it to include non-military threats to the survival of populations such as hunger and homelessness, the environment and economic inequality (Huysmans 2006, Loader and Walker 2007, Sheehan 2005). Security according to such critical analyses is not simply a given property of states or objective reality “out there” as with realist assumptions, but a social and political construction (Booth 2005, Buzan et al 1998, Cox 1981). And it is here, I suggest, that a window is opened for anthropological analysis.

Crucially, critical approaches consider how security “is what we make it. It is an epiphenomenon that is intersubjectively created. Different world views and

discourses about politics deliver different views and discourses about security” (Booth 1997: 106). Threats and danger are produced as processes, made and remade as human actors bring meaning to their relations, rather than stumbled upon in a static environment.

For constructivists security studies are about the very processes by which danger and dangerous others are perceived and produced. The aim is to interrogate the dynamics by which particular security discourses or constructions come to be taken for granted or seen as given. As such the central question becomes how some threats such as terrorism come to take priority over others – poverty, the environment, migration – and to dominate security discourse (Booth 1997, Fierke 2007: 100, Buzan et al 1998).

The Copenhagen School applies the concept of securitization in order to examine the ways in which a particular threat comes to be framed and elevated as “security” (Buzan et al 1998, Waever 1995). An issue becomes about security not because there exists an objective existential danger – although the threat may be real - but because it is construed and constructed and accepted as such. In securitizing a particular problem the state reinforces its own ability to provide security, protect citizens, and implement special measures (Zehfuss 2003). Jutta Weldes (1999) for example, explores how the official US narrative of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, explicitly constructed events as a *crisis*, suppressing alternative readings of the episode and exacerbating social insecurities to do with a permanently vulnerable US identity. And it is generally political elites who have the ability and authority to make securitizing moves, becoming the accepted voices of security by possessing the power to define it (Sheehan 2005: 53). The production and pursuit of security is inseparable from the production of insecurity and danger.

Idith Zertal (2005) suggests that the securitization of trauma was central to the construction of Israeli nationhood and national security discourse. With the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 Prime Minister David Ben Gurion mobilized the memory of the Holocaust in the making of the Zionist nation-state (Zertal 2005: 95).

Helplessness in the face of European extermination was harnessed as a contrast to Israeli strength and justification for the Zionist state. Conceptual connections were made between the Nazis and surrounding Arab opponents and combined with lessons about the consequences of life without a Jewish defence force, so that taking the fight to one's Arab enemies exonerated past failings and feebleness in the face of Nazi aggression (Zertal 2005: 111). Finally, possible recurrence of the Holocaust in Israel/Palestine became the basis for framing existential threats to Israeli identity and the Israeli state, forming the ultimate justification for numerous actions against the Palestinians and surrounding Arab populations (Shlaim 2000, Zertal 2005).

Naming an existential threat creates the conditions for increasingly exclusive community identities, distinctions between safe self and dangerous other, boundaries of citizenship, and questions about who belongs and who does not (Williams 2003, Wyn Jones 1996). What is more, such constructions may become sedimented, relatively stable practices and accepted common sense procedures (Buzan et al 1998: 31). So that over time Israeli leaders have created a near monopoly on the meaning of security in the context of conflict with the Palestinians and surrounding Arab states, tapping into the global securitization of terror in the wake of 9/11 (Burgess 2002, Yiftachel 2006). National security has been elevated to the status of accepted, commonsensical truth (Yiftachel 2006), taking precedence over other internal problems in Israeli society. Security guards stand outside public and private spaces searching for threats, suspects, and suicide bombers, while citizens remain alert for danger. So that with the collapse of the Oslo process former PM Ehud Barak's claim that there was "no partner" for peace could become common consensus. So that former PM Ariel Sharon for example, was able to initiate and carry public support for Operation Defensive Shield in Jenin in 2002 at the height of the second (al-Aqsa) *intifada*, disengage and evacuate Jewish Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005, and construct a unilateral separation barrier between Israel and the occupied West Bank, all in the name of security. Security - stable borders and safety from attack - for the citizens of Israel dominates political rhetoric and becomes a pre-requisite for potential peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

Despite some reference to everyday practices in the production of security (for example Bigo 2002), critical security argument and analysis (Buzan et al, Campbell 1998, Huysmans et al 2006, Weldes et al 1999 for example) centres on the conceptual or bureaucratic structuring of sovereignty and securitization through extra-judicial measures and states of emergency. Crucially, both the Copenhagen School and other critical approaches are pre-occupied with the exceptional or extraordinary of security; the former with the securitizing speech act of elites, and the latter with a more normalised, permanent state of exception. Human security risks spreading the concept of security so thin as to lose coherent meaning (Walt 1991) or extending securitization and its attendant talk of existential threats and emergency measures from the military to other socio-political spheres (Buzan et al 1998). For all its critique of realist theory and its focus on conceptual abstractions critical security analysis remains at the level of exceptional and conceptual construction, missing the ways in which security may be lived and felt, ordinary and mundane.

Security, as Ian Loader and Neil Walker (2007) argue, is also about subjective feelings and social relations. Their analysis of security's civilising capacities seeks to retrieve the concept of security as something felt in day to day life and recapture security as a force for "public good" (Loader and Walker 2007). It is the ordinary feelings and relations of security and the idea that security is not necessarily always something bad or coercive but may also invoke emotions and practices of inclusion, care and commitment that this thesis explores.

In addition the Copenhagen School may explain why and how elites mould and manipulate security, but not why people are taken in by or accept such constructions. What about actual people and their own practices, productions, insecurities and fears? What kinds of ordinary practices emerge in a normalised kind of state of emergency? What do people do or feel, or care and worry about? What are they anxious about or afraid of? In fact, to say security is socially constructed in these ways tells us very little about the stuff of security, about senses of security, and the daily doings of security practice as people go about their lives. If security is a social

construction and, as Weldes and colleagues (1999:1) contend “*all* social insecurities are culturally produced”, social anthropology should have a key role to play. The ways in which security is practiced, perceived and felt requires empirical, ethnographic exploration.

Anthropologists such as Nils Bubandt (2005) and Alexandra Kent (2006) have sought to engage security studies, pointing to the implicitly ethnocentric assumptions of much security theory, breaking down supposedly universal definitions to reveal other, culturally relevant and distinct security ontologies in Indonesia and Cambodia respectively. Yet neither offers an ethnographic exploration or account of how a sense of security may be produced in and through everyday practice.

The Hebrew word for security, *bitachon*, connotes promise and assurance, trust, reliance, safety and certainty; meanings and connections that speak to security as a kind of social and emotional materiality. Security is also about and builds as emotional responses, fears, and anxieties; as something felt. *Bitachon* is actual activity, a job, a set of security practices carried out by security staff across the city. Security is also something people do. Crucially security is not only about strategic concepts of the state, processes of elite production, or states of emergency – although it is about these as well - but the very ordinary business of *bitachon*. Analysis must shift from the abstract to the activity, emotions, and relations of security. And it is to these security subjects that this thesis attends.

The following chapters aim to open up and examine security practices, to explore something of the emotional materiality and everyday life of security. Security is not merely constructed but builds as emotive and material experience. A citizen stops at a security check outside a Tel Aviv shopping mall. She unbuttons her jacket, has her bag and body searched by security staff. What might this mean in a country in the midst of continuous and protracted conflict? What might it mean when particular security practices become normalised? How might normalised and ordinary security practice reflect or reveal a particular security orientation toward everyday life and constructions of security? Who does it include and exclude? What does it mean or do

to surveil and snoop and pry? Or to open up one's body to the suspicious gaze of security staff?

I ask how security may be perceived, experienced, and played out through ordinary practice. Through people and practices caught in-between, in modes and moments of possibility, where enemies are unknown and violence circulates as uncertain potentiality. We might ask: What dangers do people anticipate? What are they doing or searching for? What or who are they afraid of and what happens when the threat actually arrives? My argument is that security is ordinary, boring and mundane. It is felt in terms of suspicion and danger, notions of who belongs and who does not. It is experienced as hopes and doubts for protection and a state capable of living up to its security rhetoric. Security is the very spaces and practices where danger circulates and a certain kind of suspicious citizenship is made. Where the uncertainties of security may tell us something about the kind of state Israel is.

Anthropology in Israel

Israeli anthropology has traditionally worked at home, within the ethno-nationalist nation-state building paradox of the Jewish state and within the categories of the conflict (Einav-Weintraub 2009, Goldberg 1976, Halper 2000, Shenhav 2000, Weingrod 2004). Ethnography during the first decades of the state (from 1948) and the discipline was largely concerned with rural peripheries and the gathering of the exiles; the “esoteric, exotic “others”, meaning new immigrants and ethnic groups (Jews from Arab states), or minorities (Bedouin and Druze) at the margins of Israeli society (Ben-Ari and Bilu 1997: 14), monitoring their adaptation to life in the new, modernizing, Israeli nation-state. Henry Rosenfeld (1958) studied the Arab village, Yonina Talmon-Gerber (1970) the kibbutz society, and Emmanuel Marx (1967) studied the Bedouin.² In this sense anthropology supported and underpinned Zionist and ruling Labour party perceptions of the new Israeli society as inherently Jewish,

² Einav-Weintraub points out that while the kibbutzim were on the geographical periphery, anthropology played a key role in their transportation to the ideological heart of the new Israeli state. The immigrant settler-farmers were transformed into nation building “pioneers”.

emerging from the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv), and pre-occupied with integrating people from different countries and cultures into a single Jewish Israeli nation-state (Van Teeffelen 1980).

More recent and more critical work has focussed on minorities and politically marginalised people: peripheral people in peripheral places. Anthropologists have studied *Mizrachim* (Jews of Middle Eastern descent) (Dahan-Khalev 2001), development towns (Ben-Ari and Bilu 1997), and the Bedouin (Lavie 1990) for instance, in order to critique and question the ethnic, economic, cultural, and territorial activities of the Jewish state and Jewish settlement.

However, as I discuss in part two, political margins are not necessarily on the geographic margins. Rather, places from which to take a view from the sidelines, border making practices, or spaces through which the state attempts to assert its own precarious control may flow through, permeate, and penetrate the very body of the state (Das and Poole 2004) and the bodies of its citizens. Marginal spaces of uncertainty and creativity emerge at the street-level security check; spaces and practices in which questions of danger, belonging and citizenship circulate. Spaces and practices in and through which violence and the protective, pre-emptive powers of the state are experienced as potentiality, anticipated and awaited, invoked and undone. The margin, as this thesis seeks to explore, may assert itself in the very mundane, ordinary, security spaces at the very centre; outside cinemas, office blocks, and shopping malls in the middle of Tel Aviv.

Momentous socio-political events and conflict in the 1970s and 80s such as the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the 1982 war with Lebanon, the first *intifada*, immigration from the former USSR and Ethiopia, and increasing academic autonomy were reflected in radical “post-Zionist” shifts within Israeli society and the academy. Revisionist historians (Morris 1987, Segev 1986 for example) questioned the accepted narrative of Israeli nationhood and state formation, conduct of the 1948 war and Palestinian *nakba* (disaster), dispersal and defeat. Citizens questioned the rightfulness of Israeli military action and the notion of the nation-in-arms. Academics including

anthropologists questioned their own complicity in the creation of a particular Zionist story of the state.

As such from the 1980s onwards anthropology takes a far more critical, or reflexive approach, challenging previous conceptions and moving ethnographic focus from the periphery to the “centre”. Anthropologists concerned themselves with broader questions of “Israeliness”, national institutions and public performance. Tamar Katriel (1986) examined speech in the creation of *Sabra* (native born Israeli) culture, Eyal Ben-Ari (1998) explored the Israeli military and militarism in Israeli society, Don Handelmann (1998) studied performance of the nation and citizenship in large public events, and Moshe Shokeid (1988) Israeli emigrants in New York City.

Crucially, most anthropology in Israel is still largely done at home and still largely concerned with Jewish Israeli experience, reflecting the ethno-nationalist confines and conceptions of a state that defines itself as both a modern liberal democracy and an exclusively Jewish state. Organizations such as the *Mizrachi* Democratic Rainbow Coalition (*Keshet*) call for a post-Zionist or radical rethink of anthropological enquiry, one that includes all citizens of Israel – *Mizrachim* and Palestinian-Arabs – within the ethnographic agenda. Working and writing against what they perceive as the divisive ethnocratic logic of the state (see also work by Nira Yuval-Davis, Smadar Lavie, Illan Pappé, and Oren Yiftachel).

My own work is closer in orientation to Dan Rabinowitz’s (1987) ethnography of Jewish-Israeli residents’ relations with their Palestinian neighbours in the “mixed town” of Natzerat-Ilit (Upper Nazareth), exploring how the conflict is lived out through everyday experience. This thesis is an attempt not to write within a paradigm that depicts Palestinians and Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel as other, but to unsettle and open up one of the ordinary practices through which the ethno-nationalist effects, suspicions, and uncertainties of citizenship are produced and played out.

Anthropology of Conflict and Violence

The focus of much anthropology in contexts of conflict and combat frames violence as exceptional and extraordinary action. In efforts to explore so-called “new wars” (Richards 2005) of the post-Cold War 1990s and to counter discourse that viewed such violence as inevitable or incomprehensible action ethnographers attempted to explore the social contexts of conflict, asking how people manage their lives in the midst of state collapse, political crises, and “explosive situations” (for example Nordstrom and Martin 1992: 9, Nordstrom and Robben 1995, Greenhouse et al 2002). Like the critical turn within security studies, this kind of anthropology sought to examine how violence and war, no longer physically and conceptually the monopoly of nation-states (Richards 2005, Van Creveld 1991), should be defined, studied and theorised in a new era of insecurity and instability (for example Bowman 2001, Nordstrom and Martin 1992, Richards 2005, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, Schmidt and Schröder 2001, Sluka 1992). Anthropology emerged as a kind of “fieldwork under fire” (Nordstrom and Robben 1995), heading into the thick of battle and conducting ethnography on the front lines in Guatemala (Green 1994), Mozambique (Nordstrom 1992), Northern Ireland (Sluka 1999) and elsewhere.

Ironically much ethnography contending with conflict never really reached the frontlines, with anthropologists constructing and construing as much from the second hand stories of informants as from their own experiences written down in field notes. Such work has tended to address the cultural roots of violence, the perpetration of violence and how victims cope with violence endured in the aftermath; the “descent into the ordinary” (Das 1998) and routine acts of living through which communities may re-occupy the devastated realm of normal life. Carolyn Nordstrom (1995) for example, describes how a small group of men in Mozambique carve some semblance of order out of the chaos of conflict by transporting baskets of fish across the country. As they traverse ethnic communities and cross battle lines they transmit personal messages, bring tidings of politics and troop deployment, convey news and gossip, defying the war in a manner from which others may garner strength and sustenance to carry on (Nordstrom 1992: 145). Maria Olujic (1995) captures the

devastations wrought by conflict in Croatia and the “rituals of coping” such as public celebrations, ethnic dancing, poetry readings, and rock concerts through which people, including the anthropologist, learn to cope and carry on.

Moreover much of this work is powered by a moralising imperative to speak out against injustice encountered in the field, distinguish between victims and perpetrators, write violence and give voice to its victims (for example Scheper-Hughes 2004, Taussig 1987). The emphasis is on ethnography of the extraordinary; sudden eruptions and flash points of shocking violence in precarious states and “unstable places” (Greenhouse et al 2002). Moments of spectacular violence fracture the mundane, rupturing the fabric of everyday life and routine.

Yet there is a danger of over-determining violence and over-playing the exceptional in anthropological accounts (Kelly 2008). If one looks for the extraordinary that is, inevitably, what one finds. Indeed anthropological analyses of conflict and violence have tended to overlook the ordinary in pursuit of the spectacular. My materials suggest the ordinary or everyday might not be a default state or neutral category of description that stands in opposition to violence (Kelly 2008), or through which violence is coped with afterwards. What is at stake in such situations is not simply explosive moments of violence or their memory, strategies of survival, improvisation, or rehabilitation, but the ordinary contexts in and through which most conflict is lived. A focus on the extraordinary masks the fact that most people have no direct participation in armed conflicts (Kelly 2008, Spencer 2000). As Tobias Kelly (2008) argues, most Israelis and Palestinians spend more time reading about the conflict in newspapers, or watching violent events on TV, perhaps talking about them with friends and neighbours, and getting on with the business of daily life than they do firing guns or launching rockets. Such protracted conflict plays out in violent peaks and periods of calm and a kind of continuous conflict-routine that demands a different kind of attention. It requires not an anthropology focused only on the action or extraordinary violence itself but a social anthropology with its roots in everyday experience. In order to understand how people live with and through conflict an

exploration of the ordinary is just as crucial as the seemingly spectacular (Kelly 2008).

This thesis explores how the ordinary may be the very place where conflict and security is experienced, evoked and played out. As Veena Das argues, the ordinary should not be perceived as standing in opposition to violence as the two may be profoundly implicated and intertwined (Das 2007, Kelly 2008). I look to the ordinary business of *bitachon* (security), to the work of security staff standing outside street-corner cafes and shopping malls, bus stations and office blocks, checking bodies and bags, looking for signs of suspicion and danger. Such ordinary security practices, I suggest, should be understood as neither the stuff of spectacular violence nor its absolute absence, but as holding the two in tension (see also Kelly 2008). Violence always threatens to break through the surface of security.

Violence is not only experienced and endured in the exceptional present or coped and dealt with once the danger has passed. Violence is not a rupture but part of the everyday. It is also forecast, expected, predicted and anticipated. For to recall violence, to pass through a security check for instance, is to anticipate violence to come (Jeganathan 2004). This thesis attempts to build on ethnographies of conflict and violence and attend to the uncertainty and potentiality of anticipatory moments – awaiting within the possibility of violence’s arrival into the world. If we are to understand how people act and react within violent contexts, why people turn to armed conflict or support military action, we must also examine the mundane ways in which violence is anticipated and waited upon.

Academic preoccupations with the apparently peculiar neglect what we may learn from the oddities of the ordinary, or the abnormalities of the normal. The mundane and ordinary may underscore the strange, spectacular, or “explosive situations” of conflict. The material and social life of security – involving local, national, and international perceptions and practices – are more deeply embedded in everyday life and the maintenance of the nation-state than is visible in the flash points of conflict, violence, and national crisis. An ethnographic study of current street-level security

practices and perceptions is at the same time an ethnographic study of a specific ongoing state-building project; an anthropological exploration of the kind of state Israel is. It is necessary temporarily to turn our anthropological gaze from exceptional “explosive situations” of violence to explore the more mundane practices of security and security guards, exploring the ordinary ways through which violence may be waited and anticipated (Kelly 2008, Spencer 2000).

What might we learn from the abnormalities of the normal?

Abnormalities of the normal

In Tel Aviv people often say security practice, the presence of security checks and guards is “normal”. Of course they are also “necessary”, there is “the situation”, “*hamatsav*” (conflict with the Palestinians, surrounding Arab states, and resistance groups) to contend with after all, but “what to do?”, “*ma la’asot?*” normal life must go on. Security checks have become a routine and expected part of daily life as people traverse the city. One passes through a check on the way to the office, at the car park, central café, and shopping mall. Here we are referring to a country coping with (and creating) continuous conflicts, a country where territorial borders and boundaries of belonging are fraught with uncertainty. Where, as parts two and three of the thesis explore, security is not only about fear of an amorphous Arab enemy, but fear of the enemy within. Where the ordinariness of a Tel Aviv security check may mask or underscore the strange.

Security is not a space or place or practice that is “normal”: it is normalised. In this place the state attempts to make citizens visible and known; security staff search for danger, suspects are stopped, and violence circulates as uncertain possibility. But it is all just normal life and a normal kind of “interrupted system” (Kimmerling 1985): an interval of potentiality between the absence and presence of violence. What might we learn from unsettling the normalisation of security practice?

In her reflections on claims to normality in Northern Cyprus (a state unrecognised by the international community) Yael Navaro-Yashin (2003) warns against anthropological analyses that would normalise everyday life in situations where “normal” life is underpinned by “abnormal” experience. Instead she urges us to “sense” the disruptions and disasters that may flow beneath the surface of a pretence to normality. I agree with Navaro-Yashin (2003: 109) and Talal Asad (1979), that as anthropologists we must stay alert to the normalising discourses even of our informants. This requires not only reflecting my informants’ “normal” points of view, but apprehending the abnormalities of the normal, or ordinary security practice.

Following Navaro-Yashin (2003) this ethnography is an attempt to tease out and hold on to uncertainty, attending to the “abnormal” beneath the narrative of normality to do with security practice in Tel Aviv. How might security practices put in place in order to maintain “normal” life in the face of violent threats also reveal processes of strange normalisation, suspicious citizenship and insecurity? Particular security subjectivities, I wish to suggest, are revealed in ordinary practice, in passing comments and pastimes at security checks, in waiting and anticipating and becoming bored, in citizens consenting to security procedures, in critical commentaries made during neighbourly news debates and in popular desires for state protection. Security may not be just “about” security at all.

Taking a lead from Navaro-Yashin’s (2003) analysis of abnormal places we might ask: what can a study of the experience of working, living with, and passing through security practices and spaces in Tel Aviv tell us about the security practices, spaces and states we take for granted? The aim of this thesis is neither to render Israel an abnormal anomaly, or special case, unique among states, nor the “normal” “only democracy in the Middle East” its government likes to project and portray. Rather, an ethnographic exploration of supposedly “normal” security practice in which security staff seek to find the always potentially present yet ultimately invisible terrorist suspect - as well as anxieties surrounding the enemy within - may tell us something about similar security spaces and predicaments elsewhere. Such

ethnography opens up possibilities for reflecting on the “abnormal” aspects of security spaces, practices and puzzles in so-called “normal” liberal states. This thesis aims to open up the ordinary in order to explore the abnormal aspects of “normal” security.

Tel Aviv Ordinary

Tel Aviv is often presented and perceived as the antithesis of the “frontlines”, far away from the epicentre of conflict and violence. It is the hedonist city, the “bubble”, “*habuah*”, a narcissistic socio-cultural cocoon isolated and immune from immediate dangers elsewhere in the country: rockets flying over from Gaza, or counter-terrorism operations twenty five kilometres over the “border” in the West Bank. The implicit and sometimes explicit assumption is that while explosive violence affects other people in other places Tel Aviv is at the beach. The nickname, first used to describe the protective bubble of close friends and family that residents constructed around themselves, avoiding crowded places and public spaces during some of the worst waves of suicide attacks in 2002-2003, later became a stereotype used to satirise the city. The popular “*habuah*” provoked fierce reactions from friends and informants, particularly when it re-emerged in press reports and public debates during war with Hizbullah in the summer of 2006. Tel Aviv is the economic and creative powerhouse of the country, home to people from all over Israel, they argued. We fight in the combat units and reserve forces just like everyone else, they cried. We have had our share of death and danger, they shouted, pointing to Saddam’s Scud missile attacks during the first Gulf War and suicide bombings with the start of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* in 2000.

Much of this thesis is an attempt to open up such seemingly contradictory perceptions for exploration and analysis. It is the very ordinariness of Tel Aviv, the view that the city is removed from the real conflict, the routine and nonchalance surrounding security practices that enables us to call the “normal” into question, to explore the normalisation and everyday life of security practice and perception. For if

Tel Aviv is so ordinary and far away from the realities and casualties of conflict, if security is not so necessary, then what keeps these practices in place? What does security do? What kinds of social relations, practices, and perceptions are produced and reproduced by *bitachon*?

It is precisely these kinds of run of the mill, mundane security practices in Tel Aviv through which we may examine and glimpse the anticipation of violence; the moments that come before something or someone who may or may not arrive.

While contemporary Tel Aviv may tell us little about flash points of extreme violence or conflict between “Zionist colonials” and “Arab terrorists”, it does tell us something about the ways in which security rhetoric and relations are perpetuated and prefigured by security practices that both recall past violence and open up the possibility of its explosive arrival in the present. If we are to understand how and why people react, support and cope with extraordinary events and crises, we must also apprehend the calmer periods and ordinary ways in which security and conflict is predicted, predicated, and played out. As Kelly (2008) argues, although perhaps not as immediately engaging the ordinary is just as important.

This thesis is about security with Jewish-Israelis (but not Palestinians) in Tel Aviv. To those who argue anthropologists should only witness, write violence, and give voice to victims, I suggest it is equally important to write about the people often perceived as perpetrators (see also Crapanzano 1985). Most often missed by analytical distinctions between victims and villains are the uncertainties, anxieties, and fears, however indulgent or imaginary by comparison, of the Tel Aviv security guard, or the Israeli passing through a security check, the friend turning over and going back to sleep after news of an attack, and others like them. Exclusive and inclusive practices of security, the anticipation and normalisation of security must be explored. Anxieties surrounding particular bodies, senses of suspicion, feelings of responsibility and commitment must be addressed. Feelings of strength and vulnerability, the contours of citizenship and uncertain boundaries of belonging must be examined if any appreciation of security practice and “the situation” is to be

accomplished. Here I side with Vincent Crapanzano's suggestion that the "dispositions and predispositions of the dominant, have to be understood if any understanding of domination is to be achieved" (Crapanzano 1985: 22).

People, as this thesis will show, are not always so neat and tidy, not always "victims" or "perpetrators". My security staff informants, or the volunteers with the civil guard, or the Israelis in that neighbourhood around the garden-square where I lived – none of them were villains, but for the most part ordinary people with ordinary hopes, anxieties, and suspicions. The job of ethnography, or engaged ethnography, is not just to give voice to victims or make a statement. In fact, it may be equally important to acknowledge and reflect ambiguity or uncertainty, to unsettle, create discomfort and provoke critical thought.

Context of fieldwork

My first trip to Israel when I was twelve and a half took place in 1990. It was a *bat mitzvah* present from my Grandma and for ten hot days in June the two of us sat on the beach in Tel Aviv, visited family, ate falafel, floated in the Dead Sea and went on tour to Jerusalem.

I returned in July 1993 for a month-long Jewish youth tour of the Homeland along with about forty other almost sixteen year olds. We joined sweaty coach loads of Diaspora teens from Europe and the US, travelling the length and breadth of the tiny country, tramping about ancient archaeological sites, listening to lectures, learning a few words of Hebrew and spending a week on a kibbutz. In Israel/Palestine the Israeli military were restricting movement between occupied Palestinian territories and the negotiations between Israel and the PLO that would result in the signing of the Oslo Accords in September continued apace. Not that we noticed. I returned having spent most of my time making friends and flirting, sporting some sunburn, a new smoking habit and a taste for Turkish coffee.

When I returned for fieldwork in 2005 the Oslo process had long since collapsed and a second *intifada* erupted in the West Bank in 2000. Palestinian resistance groups had responded to the continuing occupation with terror-tactics such as suicide bombings against Israeli citizens and the state had responded in kind with counter-terrorism strategies such as military incursions, home demolitions and targeted assassinations. Buses, markets, cafes, bus stations and bars were blown up across Tel Aviv and to a greater extent Jerusalem, with alarming frequency. Jenin refugee camp was bulldozed to the ground. From my teenage trip I remembered lots of soldiers and an armed Israeli tour leader who cleaned her gun every morning, but now security staff were all over the place, standing with magnetic wands outside the supermarket and the post office, hopping on and off the buses, pacing the pavement outside the shopping mall. All kinds of public and private spaces – anywhere with a small concentration of people – were now presumed targets requiring some kind of security-protection against potential suicide-terror. And the private security industry had boomed. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his successor Ehud Olmert had built a fence between Israel and the West Bank, cutting through some Palestinian villages, separating farmers from their lands and in some cases encircling entire towns with concrete walls up to 8 feet high. During my first summer of fieldwork the Israelis evicted Jewish Israeli settlers from Gaza and bolstered their West Bank settlement blocks. Along the so-called “separation barrier” stood military checkpoints, concrete watch towers, barbed wire and border police. In Tel Aviv 25 kilometres away on the coast things seemed less intense but still surreal. Street-level security staff had popped up all over the city in efforts to ensure “normal” life could carry on, but Tel Avivians had long since returned to “normal” and given up the panic and fear of earlier years. In this period of relative calm, for Israeli citizens at least, the quest for normality seemed rather strange.

For my first few months I lived with extended family in Rishon LeZion, a sprawling town south east of Tel Aviv, and joined the collection of lodgers - two students, a soldier, and an accountant - sharing their home. It was here I watched hours of trashy TV - Israel’s version of *The Apprentice*, Israel’s *Next Top Model* – picked up bits of Hebrew along the way, discovered delicious Yemeni spices and received fashion

advice from my Auntie's sister. I began flat hunting and enrolled in *ulpan* (Hebrew language and culture school) in Tel Aviv. Every morning I caught a bus and then a lift from a French classmate before sitting with my fellow students as our flamboyant teacher Shlomit, a charismatic vision in pastel pink and bright lipstick, joked, yelled and drilled the Hebrew language into her English-French-Spanish-Bulgarian-German-Romanian-Russian speaking class. Outside during our breaks, while Shlomit smoked her super-long slim-line cigarettes and we munched breakfast a security guard stood watch, keeping a lookout and smoking as we struggled with Hebrew. Elsewhere, across Tel Aviv, security staff (figure 2) greeted me at the entrance to the market, the bank, the bus station, looked inside my bag and checked my body with a magnetic wand (*magometer*) (figure 3).



Figure 2



Figure 3

Like most visitors when they arrive in Israel I was struck by the seemingly ubiquitous security staff. But sooner or later I found I hardly noticed the security checks as I passed through on my way to the cinema, or a particular café, or crossed the local antiques fair on my way to do the weekly laundry wash. They became, as almost everyone else told me, just part of “normal” life. Or not. Quite. Checking bags and bodies for bombs seemed a very strange kind of “normal” activity and occasionally there would be an explosion, a nightclub blown up here, a shawarma stand there. It was these very ordinary, mundane, security practices that seemed an interesting location from which to explore the social life of security practice.

I learned Hebrew and began to explore Tel Aviv on foot, went to the beach, ran in the park, and when she finished work, went apartment hunting with Tali, often staying the night at her place and walking to school the next morning. Eventually I found an apartment to rent – ground floor, crumbling, white-washed walls – and a flatmate – loud, caring, Israeli – at the edge of a small park-square in central Tel Aviv. I said goodbye to Rishon and my early morning commute and moved in with Dan, a colleague of a friend of a friend who came home from work each evening, slept for a few hours and then went out to meet a friend or date for the night. Together we put up wonky shelves, decorated with amateur home-made art and dealt with our neurotic mother and daughter landladies.

Our apartment, in a small central block, was all large rooms and lofty ceilings; a long corridor with two bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and sitting room leading off it. Sunlight filtered through the plastic shutters, as did the nightly invasion of those very Tel Avivian pests: near constant noise, giant moth-like creatures, and scuttling cockroaches, until Dan and I took drastic action and invested in some window nets.

To the back of our block was a patch of scrub and bushes separating our building from those to the rear. Not so much a garden as a dumping ground for discarded bits and bobs, from a rusty exercise machine to broken breeze blocks, and a stamping ground for local stray cats. A few metres away to either side lay more apartment buildings and a variety of vines, straggly citrus trees and palm plants. In the front

was a graphic design company and a small garden tended by the old man from the top floor. Every Friday without fail he would swap his weekday shirt for a pair of worn shorts and a hosepipe, shuffling along the pathway to our entrance door, watering any greenery in sight and leaving a slippery flood of water in his wake.

And beyond our four storeys lay the street and the square, crumbling khaki coloured concrete apartment blocks and the smooth lines of 1930s Bauhaus buildings coloured in spring with hibiscus flowers, bougainvillea and Jacaranda trees.

With one's neighbours living in such close proximity it was always noisy; the air seemed to reverberate with sound. The dawn chorus began with the birds at four a.m. and got into full swing at around five with the BANG! RRR-CLANKETY-CLUNK! of the garbage truck grinders as they rumbled through the deserted early morning streets. Then came the sing-song "*kelev tov, kelev to-o-o-ov*" ("good dog, go-o-o-od dog") as the kid from upstairs praised his puppy for doing his business outside my bedroom window yet again. Then the yelling of children and family arguments over breakfast, the slamming of car doors, the honking of horns, the swish-swish of stairwells being swept, police sirens, and the pet parakeet from across the road mimicking the wee-oo wail of car alarms. By evening this soundscape gave way to a neighbour bashing out soft rock ballads on his electric guitar, Depeche Mode on someone's stereo, the blare of television news, Dan yelling for assistance with an insect invader, amorous lovers, the screech and scuffle of stray cats and the ever-present ding-a-ling of cell phone ring tones, battling it out against the rattle-and-hum of ancient air conditioners that would whirr away well into the sticky summer nights.

During particular periods, depending on the time of year, the weather and my fieldwork routine, a great deal of my life took place within a two block radius of the apartment; a triangle between Dizengoff and King George Streets. Follow the streets out of and adjacent to the square in one direction and walk past the office of immigrant absorption to the busy, bustling Dizengoff street, the gym and a small grocery store. Take another route and find yourself on Frishmann street, another corner store and an ever-popular café where the "beautiful people" congregate every

weekend, sitting at the pavement tables watching the world, the traffic and the walkers pass by. Another direction and one reaches a neighbour's clothes shop, a martial arts supplier, synagogue, music shop, manicurist, tailor, Russian butcher, men's underwear boutique and another café. All street level retail outlets in otherwise residential buildings. Then one hits Dizengoff once again and all the cars, taxi cabs, buses, service taxis and people, an array of flip-flop, music, and food shops, fruit juice stalls, pharmacies and coffee shops. The pet shop with its bubbling window aquaria and the tourist shop with its dated postcards, tacky tee shirts sporting dated slogans - "*SuperJew*" and "America don't worry, Israel is behind you" – and empty isles in these tourist-scarce times.



Another road from the square takes you past a bric-a-brac emporium run by an Argentinian neighbour, the post office, an Indian restaurant, two hotels and a lottery ticket booth before coming out on Dizengoff square: a raised, run-down pedestrian thoroughfare and home to my launderette, two banks, a cinema and the local punks. Haunt of the homeless, the elderly and the itinerant, the bi-weekly antique flea market and the multi-coloured "fire and water fountain" (generally considered a visual blot on the landscape) that spins around several times a day, spurting streams of water and shooting flames in the air, all to a booming soundtrack. Take another-tree-lined street, turn right and pass a bookkeeper, a second hand rock music store, a flashy hairdresser and a falafel joint run by smiling staff offering freshly fried falafel balls to customers waiting in line, filling warm pita breads with hummus, parsley, salad and sauerkraut. I never counted all of the shops and stalls around about, certain to miss one or two, preferring to jot down the familiar sights that make up my own map of the neighbourhood. On a day to day basis and especially when it was too hot, too rainy, or when I had nothing better to do, my entire life revolved around these

few small blocks. It was where I sat and read books, did my laundry, shopped for groceries, went to the gym and spent hours chatting to neighbours or sitting quietly at the kiosk in the square.

Hadas's kiosk stands in one corner of the garden-square, criss-crossed by plant beds, paths, public benches, and a mini-playground. Around the edges stand giant trees, their trunks twisted with parasitic plants and vines, their branches home to the neighbourhood bats who make their swooping presence known at night. The square sits in the centre of four streets, filled from time to time with children on the merry-go-round, or the odd person drinking vodka and passing out on a bench, but mostly people come to drink coffee, catch up on gossip, and let their dogs run around the 20 square metres or so of green-ish space. The plants are in a permanent state of dog-trampled devastation.

Hadas, a former nurse, usually found juicing carrots, swatting flies, or smoking a cigarette while poring over the newspaper's daily Sudoku challenge, now provides coffee, tea and sympathy to locals and passers by. Her kiosk clientele change with the hours: a legal secretary and an architect take an early morning caffeine fix and flick through the day's headlines, followed by a clothing designer, a high school electronics teacher, a guitar tutor and some students. In the evening people drop by for a drink on their way home, to meet friends, or walk the dog. If someone was out of work, studying, on vacation, or an anthropologist, they often became semi-permanent fixtures, reading books, playing chess, leaning on the counter.

It was in this corner of Tel Aviv that I lived for the rest of my stay, and was welcomed with a mixture of interest, ambivalence and mild amusement until I left in December 2007. It was these neighbours sat at the kiosk, their conversations and lives I followed and to some extent shared, and (as I explore in part three) whose experiences of security I tried to comprehend. It was from this square that I wandered each day to work with security staff around the city. I did three main things with my fieldwork days and nights: participant observation with security guards during their shifts at different points and places across the city; volunteering and late night street

patrols with civil guards from the local civil guard base; keeping up with local and national events, senses and concerns to do with security as they emerged within the conversations, activities and lives of and with informants, friends, neighbours and fellow kiosk customers.

Security staff were ubiquitous on the city streets, standing guard outside some, but not all buildings, bars and bus stations. With the outbreak of the al-Aqsa *intifada* in 2000 waves of suicide bombers hit cafes, bars and shopping malls in Israel and security staff were put in place to protect the public and prevent attacks so that “normal” everyday life could continue. *Bitachon* (security) was a job and a job that employed a lot of people. So “normal” and widespread a sight and procedure had security become that nobody could tell me precisely how many people were in the business. An executive at the Histadrut (Israeli trade union congress) told me nobody knew the exact figures but thought about 400 security companies operated, employing around 90,000 security guards. However with unregistered companies and illegal workers she was sure the numbers were even higher. The central bureau of statistics did not calculate security as a separate area of commerce and employment. The director of a security company estimated around 420 companies with anywhere from 65-80,000 security staff. Security guards stood in trousers and shirts emblazoned with their company logo and the words “*bitachon*”, “security”, guarding the gates to a café, supermarket, or cinema, surveilling the scene for signs of danger or someone dangerous, checking inside bags and scanning bodies. At larger places with multiple entrances and gates like a station or shopping mall, the job of checking bodies and bags belonged to “*selectorim*”, “selectors”, or “*bodkim*”, “checkers” who stood static at the gates, waving their magnetic wands over peoples’ backs and bellies, while security guards patrolled the pavements, searching for suspects.

In contrast the Civil Guard (*Mishmar Ezrachi*) is a voluntary organisation. Beginning life in the early seventies when communities close to the West Bank border created their own neighbourhood protection units to prevent local attacks, today the Civil Guard operates as a kind of volunteer branch of the Community Police and for the most part is rather less glamorous than the promotional pictures of gun-toting guards,

jeeps and helicopters would imply. At my local base we were mostly responsible for terrorism – and sometimes petty crime – prevention, carrying out night-time patrols in our ancient police van, standing guard at the Carmel market, securing public events and occasionally operating temporary checkpoints. Despite the popular perceptions that these days the civil guards were all old men and oddballs with nothing better to do, volunteers came from across town and from all different backgrounds, from lawyers and car salesmen with a strong sense of public duty to young police wannabe's looking for some "action".

What this "action" is varies widely between the volunteers, some spending most of their time responding to domestic complaints about loud music or late night parties, others happy just to drive around with van lights flashing. Others, like little volunteer vigilantes scour the streets for suspicious types. More often than not all was inaction and inactivity, dynamism eventually dissolving into disappointment. But one Tuesday night the "action" finally came our way, albeit car thieves and not Arab terrorists. "We have action tonight!" cries Eldad as he shifts up a gear and the rickety van revs into life. Everyone: Eldad, David and myself - Orly is busy with her new boyfriend and Ronen we have left waiting on a street corner - sits up in excitement. The cops are closing in on a pair of car thieves and our small band of volunteers is in hot pursuit, in on the act for once, speeding along, crossing lanes, action, action, action!...Until we find we cannot locate the exact spot and the amateur nerves set in. What if we blunder in by mistake? What if we inadvertently alert the car thieves, ruin it all and get the blame? So we circle around some side streets instead, slow down, stop and miss all the action – a bathetic slip from the spirited to the ridiculous – arriving only after the arrest and a final all clear.

Methodology considerations

In a situation where security staff are on the look out for danger, my anthropological requests were met with more than a little suspicion. Some security guards and selectors refused to let me spend time with them, wary of who I really was and what

I really intended to do with the data I gathered. I quickly realised these “normal” security practices were serious stuff to many security staff. One told me to go away, another worried that I would learn too much about how to beat their *bitachon* system, another offered me a job on the condition I give up my research. Some required letters, phone calls, meetings and a police background check. Others, after a little perseverance and persuasion agreed to let me tag along once or twice a week.

Often it was the realization I was Jewish with family in the country that made all the difference, that broke through the bureaucratic barriers and brought me permission to hang about and follow people around. In the intervening years between my Israel visits I had long lost interest in all things Jewish back home. I had read my history of Israel/Palestine and realised the Zionist roots of those youth tours. I did not think of myself as part of a Jewish group, or religion, or anything. Until now. Here it mattered. Here it was my ticket to places and people, a kind of assumed trust, as if to know I was Jewish was, as many people said, to know “you are one of us”, a member of the clan, on our side. It was this membership of the Jewish people plus my knowledge of some security guard slang shared by the police and picked up from fieldwork that tamed Tel Aviv’s community police chief. One minute I was a crazy foreign tourist trying to work with his civil guards, the next I was one of the family, welcomed with almost open arms and foisted on my local branch commander, who then passed me on to one of his volunteer subordinates. But I soon found my place on the rota joining small groups of volunteers to patrol the city streets in our old police van several nights a week. Before long I was just another volunteer about the place.

My work was focussed around security staff at several security sites across the city, including a bar, cafes, supermarket, bus station, train station, the university and an office block. This included shadowing security staff on duty, patrolling the pavement, or sitting and chatting with security guards and selectors at their security gates. I joined civil guard patrols as an honorary volunteer standing guard outside the market on a Friday and driving around the city streets in the small hours of the morning keeping watch for suspects and looking out for “action”. I therefore

conducted a great deal of participant observation and informal conversations in these settings, as well as the odd interview. For the most part security staff work extremely long hours and the last thing they wanted to do at the end of it or in their own time was sit down and be interviewed by me. Some were also wary of committing their thoughts to a voice recording lest it be intercepted by management or potential terrorists. As it was all my questions and queries could be answered during the course of a shift.

I followed the security staff and civil guards and followed the security spaces - security gates, public events, community police stations, staff rooms, the civil guard van, temporary checkpoints, the central city streets - and people as they passed through, following the flow of events. Such contexts and experiences were not confined to the security check, the civil guard base, or my neighbourhood kiosk but flowed between local and wider contexts, between peoples' own perceptions and practices, political rhetoric or national security concerns. For this reason I also followed the Israeli newspapers, TV news and websites people were reading and discussing as much as possible. Sometimes events and moments of crisis took over and I just followed my nose. In July 2006 for example, war broke out with Hizbullah in south Lebanon. As neighbours sat debating the news over coffee and cigarettes security social life appeared much better experienced and observed around the neighbourhood kiosk than at a security check. This fieldwork flow is reflected through the following chapters.

My writing seeks to capture and convey this following flow - as I did in the field - allowing ethnography to take precedence. It seeks to capture my fieldwork accompanying security staff as they stand at security checks, scan the social scene for suspects and search bags and bodies for signs of danger; assisting civil guards as they patrol the night time streets for suspects; and attending to neighbourhood kiosk discussions about the news and opinions of the day. This writing thus aims to evoke the activities of security staff waiting for danger, whether the swift pragmatic moves of opening bags and swiping bodies, or the slowness and stickiness of boring time. Following the flow of events as they were experienced and engaged with by security

staff informants, civil guard volunteers, friends, neighbours and the anthropologist enables analysis – as it did in the field – to emerge ethnographically. It involves an empirical foregrounding that aims to explore and evoke, switching between ethnography with security and civil guards, analysis and broader security debate in order to present the security practices and perspectives of checks, guards and citizens with all their atmosphere, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

The politics of the situation did lead to some restrictions on my research. My association and attachment to security staff enabled me to see the spotting and stopping of suspicious people but not to enter into conversations with these – often Palestinian – suspects. Not only was my Arabic almost non-existent (although many people spoke Hebrew) but most did not want to interact with me or there was simply not time during the few brief minutes before they were sent on their way or handed over to local police. I was also concerned that too much interaction with the potential enemy or possible suspect would arouse suspicions amongst my security guard informants. For this reason although I did research security spaces, people and practices including those keeping watch and those passing through, my fieldwork inevitably captures only one security side. But this too, is part of the security check and is therefore revealing.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part one examines security as boredom, anticipation and awaiting violence which may or may not arrive. It asks what does security feel like? And what is it waiting for?

Part one examines security as a kind of temporality and emotive experience of waiting and anticipation. It follows security staff as they wait, slip into and battle with boredom, try to pass the time and stay alert. Security staff must stay awake, watch and wait for signs of danger and suspicious people. As they wait they often become bored, play games and pass the time in attempts to combat inertia and encourage attention. Discussion explores the experiences of security guards and

selectors and engages with philosophical, literary and anthropological interpretations of boredom and waiting. Security, I argue, emerges as a particular kind of waiting, an uncertain and boring anticipation of potential violence to come. Despite all the pastimes and activities security staff always come back - the next hour, the next shift, the next day - to watchful waiting. Boredom creeps in once again as guards find themselves still waiting, still anticipating, still becoming bored.

Part two explores security as ordinary activity, practices of legibility, surveillance and suspicion. As such it focuses on the actual actions and doing of security; how security staff and civil guards check citizens and how people react to those checks. It asks what is security? And what does security do? Who, what, how and why security staff are waiting and anticipating, surveilling and searching for?

Chapter two examines and follows how security staff go about reading danger off documents and detecting persons without papers. Discussion begins by placing street-level security checks and practices in Tel Aviv within wider academic and political debate about surveillance, legibility and risk. It questions peoples' contradictory perceptions of security checks, asks whether security in Israel/Palestine is just a form of preventative performance and argues in favour of an ethnographic approach to security as active practice and emotional experience. However, despite various techniques of "telling" people without papers and the pleasure security staff take in their own expertise, documents are an unclear and uncertain source of danger detection. Security staff are preoccupied not with papers but with actual bodies and particular persons.

Given the bodily preoccupations of security staff, chapter three explores how security guards and civil guards go about reading danger off bodies and race as they look to corporeal sights, sounds and suspicions, comportment and composure. Here the focus is not on persons without papers but on bodies that could be carrying bombs. The chapter begins with the suspicious bodily signs security staff are on the lookout for, before exploring dispositions and demeanour, stereotypes, strangers and demography, following the strategies of guards and selectors as they slip back and

forth between specific suspicions and more cultural notions of danger and belonging. I argue that *bitachon* may be less about performance or legibility or defence against dangerous suspects than the playing out of intimate and illegible populations, racialised dangers and ethno-nationalist uncertainties.

Chapter four turns from the activities of security staff to those of citizens passing through the security gates, exploring interactions and engagement between the checker and the checked. *Bitachon* is not only about the exclusion of suspicious persons or the essentialist effects of belonging; it is also about solidarity, pulling together in the face of potential danger and inclusion in a community of Jewish-Israeli citizens. Security also elicits the consent, collusion and critique of citizens who also keep watch, unzip their bags and open their bodies up for inspection. It is, I argue, in this kind of exclusive-inclusive interaction, this ordinary yet odd dance around danger, that Israeli citizens are formed.

Part three turns away from security checks to explore security as the critical comments and commitments of citizens hoping for a competent and protective state. Security may not be about the external or excluded other, but the enemy within. Each chapter in part three follows recent events in Israel - conflict with Hizbullah in the summer of 2006, political corruption and scandal, and the escape of a notorious criminal – in order to explore relations between the state, security and citizens. As such it examines some of the events and experiences, communities of critique and commitment that unfold when the anticipated threat actually arrives. It asks what happens when conflict and violence arrives? What are people afraid of? Each chapter examines ways in which conflict and security may be produced, experienced and lived out through peoples' rather ordinary actions in the world. Each explores how easily collective anxiety, insecurities and critique may be brought about not by the scale or magnitude of the threat - war with an external enemy, political corruption, a convict on the run - but by the perceived incapacity and protective impotence of the state.

Chapter five seeks to explore popular criticisms and concerns surrounding threats to national security and state protection during the “war” with Hizbullah in the summer of 2006. In order to do so the chapter concentrates on and circulates between the perspectives and practices of my local “public sphere”: informants, friends and neighbours at my local kiosk café as well as with my flatmate, as they and we debated with the daily news, argued and agreed with one another over military tactics and the protective capacity of the state. Discussion jumps back and forth between the news articles people were reading and neighbours’ conversations, between national and local events, attempting to draw the bigger security picture out of the immediate circumstances through which they played out. I argue that the state seems to provoke and aggravate the very dangers and insecurities against which it claims to secure and protect. Communities of critical citizens reveal and reproduce the state’s protective (in)capacities through their own criticisms, cares and commitments, sometimes called upon to protect the state, sometimes hoping and doubting for a state capable of protecting them.

Chapter six examines the public uproar, collective anxieties and popular cynicism surrounding the political scandals and stories of corruption that came to light with the end of the war. It follows several scandalous tales and argues that despite all the public shock, questions, jokes and criticisms, corruption appeared an almost expected part of political and normal life. The idea of the state’s protective (in)capacities and credibility was reproduced and normalised through peoples’ resigned, critical and creative everyday actions upon the world.

Chapter seven focuses on the flow of events and experiences surrounding another type of security threat: the sudden escape of a convicted criminal onto the streets of Tel Aviv. It follows the fears, frustrations and satirical responses of citizens faced with a police force scouring the country and struggling to recapture their convict. This chapter explores how a sense and experience of security and protection inheres not only in national security concepts and military conflicts but through the domestic dramas, fiascos and disorder that take place behind the belligerent voices and bombs of war. Notions, illusions and hopes for security and protection may nevertheless

emerge in the very absence of sovereign protection, through the shared experiences of critical communities created in the absence and incompetence of state security (Wedeen 2003).

Part three ends with a comparison across the three chapter episodes and events.

Interlude

The motif, metaphor and material evidence of the “fortress city” or “urbicide” may not be so noticeable for Jewish-Israeli residents of central Tel Aviv but are the salient aspects of much contemporary West Bank settlement and landscape; the “separation barrier”, barbed wire and “buffer zones”, the fortified Jewish hilltop settlements, highways for Jewish settlers only, the surrounded and sometimes bulldozed Palestinian cities (see for example Graham 2002, 2004, Gregory 2003, Weizman 2004, 2007, Yiftachel 2006).

Security checks do not always blend into the background. Such checks can hardly be ordinary or barely noticeable to the intruder who intends to blow him or herself up, or for the person who seems suspicious and is stopped, questioned and pulled aside. The Tel Aviv street-level security checks where I conducted much of my fieldwork also echo another, less benign and more intense situation elsewhere, one which is rarely encountered by Tel Aviv residents themselves. Towards the end of my time in Tel Aviv I went on a trip to another kind of checkpoint, one synonymous with our TV news footage of the conflict, the Israeli military presence and occupation in Palestine. One only a few kilometres away in terms of physical distance yet far away from the everyday security experience of most people in Tel Aviv.

We reached this checkpoint, this military security check, by travelling out of Tel Aviv and taking the road north-eastwards and into the West Bank. “Now you will see a different side of security” Dalia told me as she hopped out of the car to attach “*Machsom Watch*” (checkpoint watch) signs to the windcreens and attach a white “*Machsom Watch*” flag to the roof (as a sign of non-military, non-settler credentials),

before driving us through our first checkpoint, over the Green Line and into Palestine. I was spending a day with Dalia and Rachel, two veterans of various leftwing women's movements in Israel and volunteers with *Machsom Watch*, an organisation of Israeli women dedicated to monitoring the military occupation in the West Bank, travelling out to checkpoints on a daily basis to observe, witness and report (see www.machsomwatch.org).

Amidst heated debate over the recent mystery of the missing reports, disappearing somewhere in cyberspace (had Dalia accidentally pressed the wrong computer key? Had it been sent but then stolen? Had the army infiltrated their entire website system?), the two women pointed out villages, settlements and towns, farmers, fences, children and checkpoints, olive groves, soldiers and signposts along the way. We stopped off to say hello to some Palestinian friends, purchase some biscuits and pass the time of day. Many of the roads we travelled along were exclusively Israeli; part of the "roads regime" imposed by the IDF and prohibiting Palestinian travel along routes constructed to service Jewish Israeli settlements (B'Tselem 2004).

Beit Iba checkpoint is one of three permanent military checkpoints to the west of the Palestinian town of Nablus, connecting western villages with the town and manned by soldiers controlling the opening times and categories of persons who are permitted to pass (UNOCHA 2005). Public vehicles are not allowed through the checkpoint, so people take a taxi or bus to Beit Iba, alight and pass through on foot before climbing aboard another bus on the other side. Yellow taxi cabs and busses lined each side of the concrete checkpoint, accompanied by stalls selling snacks and refreshments to travellers. Eight vehicles queued in the dust waiting to enter Nablus and another three stood in line on the Nablus side. Around thirty pedestrians stood in lines between pale concrete blocks and behind fenced barriers waiting to pass the man-size metal turnstiles and present their papers for inspection. Dalia chats with the odd person passing through, poses for a photograph with one youth, and says hello to several people. She tells me how the *Machsom Watch* women are probably the only Israelis most Palestinians are likely to have seen since the start of the *intifada* who are not in uniform. Likewise most Israelis do not see or think about these kinds of

security check, she says. I think of the people I know, most but not all of whom are more likely to be engrossed in news about football scores, the latest fashions, internal politics, poverty, economics, or a new Israeli film than they are to pay attention to articles about life in the occupied territories.

To one side sat a soldier in a camouflaged watchtower while several others, all male soldiers clad in army uniforms and carrying guns, stood checking documents or standing around about watching people or directing pedestrians. They did not smile and rarely spoke, barking out the odd directive when people lined up in the wrong spot or when waving pedestrians on by. Dalia and Rachel, expert observers, take down notes while I take the odd photograph or take notes about them taking down notes. The front of the actual check itself was obscured and out of sight, being obliged on this occasion to stay firmly on our side of the checkpoint and, much to Dalia and Rachel's amusement, behind the latest addition to the checkpoint's signs; a small piece of paper taped to a pole and declaring – in bad Hebrew and brown marker pen – “*Kav Nashot Watch!*” or “Watch Women line!”.

The two kinds of security check imply and echo each other, the internal and external governance of bodies, conflict, uncertainty and unease. For most Tel Avivians like me, who pass through their security interactions in a matter of seconds the checkpoints West Bank Palestinians must traverse, the waiting for hours, the strong military presence, the ambulances not being able to get through, the farmers unable to reach their land, the stranglehold around towns and villages, the students trying to make it to university, the deadly army incursions and targeted assassinations, are stories on the pages of a daily newspaper and not an “everyday” reality. Nobody goes there except one's son the soldier, or husband or father the reservist, and once they come back they tend not to talk about it. And so the very forceful restrictions of checkpoints 30km or so away are simply echoed in the Tel Aviv security check's mundane movements and intimate interactions, in the reproduction of consenting citizens, anxiety and attachment to a Jewish state, illegibility and unease.

We complete our checkpoint rounds by dusk, heading back to Tel Aviv through the dust, heat and wind. As Dalia and Rachel discuss internal women's movement politics and their family dilemmas I stare out of the window. I feel like a voyeur, visiting reality for a few hours only to turn back and go home to Tel Aviv, back to my Tel Aviv security checks and my research, my movie store and my coffee shop – to what now feels like my very own *bu'ah*; the insular bubble metaphor that had been levelled at Tel Aviv life and so enraged friends and informants during the summer 2006 “war” with Hizbullah in southern Lebanon. Why was I strolling and standing around Tel Aviv security checks while an hour's drive from my field work there was a more intense situation and suffering in the name of security? I came to Tel Aviv to try and understand security as a practice for Israelis, to explore the ordinary as opposed to the extraordinary experiences of conflict, from its moments of anticipation rather than actual conflict, the persistence of security practice, what it did and some of the ordinary ways in which conflict is played out in the everyday. And to try and understand these things and these people in a place as possibly far away from Beit Iba as one could get - from the “first Hebrew city”, city of nonstop nightlife, the White city. I thought one ought to engage with these Israelis, these practices and why Tel Avivians continue to pass through security checks. To explore some of the ways in which security is lived within the margins of ordinary and central life and not only the view from the geographic, social or political margins, the extraordinary explosion or the military checkpoint. To appreciate not simply how a soldier stands at a checkpoint in the name of national security but how, what and why hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens work at and pass through security checks every day. Mine was not a Palestinian checkpoint story but that did not make me feel any better that day. As we hit central Tel Aviv I hopped out of the car and headed straight to the shops, seeking comfort in the mounds of soft Chanukah *sufganiot* (donuts) for sale and packing a box of the shiny sugary cakes to take home.

Part one: Boredom and Waiting

I'm bored
I'm bored
I'm the chairman of the bored
I'm sick
I'm sick of all my kicks
I'm sick of all the stiffs
I'm sick of all the dips
I'm bored
I bore myself to sleep at night
I bore myself in broad daylight
'cause I'm bored
I'm bored
Just another dirty bore...

Iggy Pop, *I'm bored*

Waiting, one says, is boring.

Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

Picture a station, a maze-like transportation terminus on the south side of central Tel Aviv, a hub for commuters masquerading as a cheap shopping mall. The area of town, somewhat dirty and dilapidated, is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Tel Aviv, home to hustlers and hard working people, many *Mizrachim*, new and old immigrants from Ethiopia, Georgia and Romania, as well as Thai and Filipino foreign workers. All people and all public transport are checked before entering the complex by a team of private security staff; a mixture of world-weary veterans, police wannabes, teenagers fresh from the army and elderly gentlemen sitting on stools. My flatmate was born and raised in the area and likes to stop by the old neighbourhood for fresh pastries. Hadas who runs our local coffee kiosk comes to

this part of town for cheap pairs of shoes. Several *selectorim* live around the corner and come to the station every day to do security.

The station and all its noise, heat and activity, familiar sights, scents and smells greeted me every time I alighted from a bus or service taxi to visit the security staff, or, like everyone else was on my way to catch a bus elsewhere, in transit, arriving back from out of town, or simply stopping by to pick up some cheap bagels. Traffic roars past the building. Pop music blares from the shoe shop's giant speakers. A dishevelled man in torn trousers and shirt sits against the side of the railing, smoking a cigarette stub and rattling a paper begging cup. People stand at the road-side bus stops with plastic shopping bags or walk briskly on by, talking loudly to one another or on cell phones. Thick, greasy smells of *shawarma* and traffic fumes waft through the air. The station – its buses, ticket offices and shops – looms above; several storeys of grey-brown concrete, small neon lights and signs. Buses rumble along the bridge overhead and spiral up and around the building. Parts of the wall are plastered with brightly coloured posters advertising a new club night or concert by an Israeli folk singer. At the news stand papers are displayed with Hebrew or Russian headlines alongside packets of chewing gum, cold drinks and cigarettes. Seven or eight people stand waiting, bags in hand, between the blue barriers at each security gate as one by one the *selector* inspects them, their bodies and their baggage.

The *selector*, Ronen, says “hello” to a middle-aged woman, who un-zips her brown leather handbag and places it, open, on the table. Ronen bends down over the bag, places his right hand inside and shuffles it around, feeling the items. The woman stares over his shoulders. After a few, brief seconds Ronen lifts the bag, left hand underneath and moves it gently up and down, “feeling the weight, feeling it is not too heavy like a bomb” he tells me later. Putting the bag back down he snatches up his *magnometer* (hand-held metal detector), leans forward and waves it over – though never touching - the woman's belly and back. “*Beseder*”, “fine” he says, motioning her to move on. “Thank you” the woman replies, picks up her bag and passes through the heavy doors. “Your bag please”, Ronen asks the next person in line, taking the

carrier bags and placing them open on the table. Ronen stoops down, places his right hand inside and shuffles it around...

Another *selector* Ravit, sits on a scuffed plastic chair chained to the railing, behind a small round table. Her face downcast, she takes a drink from a plastic bottle of Coke and fidgets with the *magnometer* in her hand, takes out a cigarette and lights it. She stares to her right, stands, stubs out the cigarette with her foot, sits, checks her radio, and lights another. A young man approaches and slips in between the blue barriers, unzipping his rucksack with one hand and holding a cell phone in the other. He places the bag on the table and stands continuing his cell phone conversation. Ravit stamps out her cigarette and leaps to her feet.

Security guards generally come to the public's attention in times of crisis and conflict; a sudden bombing, a stabbing, or attack, signalling a disaster that has been averted or lives have been lost. Viewed through media reports and the prism of the conflict security work may take on dynamic proportions. As outside observers we may associate security in Israel/Palestine with adrenaline fuelled action and red alerts, with explosions, excitement and danger. But for the most part *bitachon* (security) is neither extraordinary nor spectacular; it is positively hum-drum. Security is a job, an activity and a feeling. It is going through the mundane motions checking body after bag after body like Ronen. It is sitting, waiting, fidgeting and leaping to alert attention like Ravit. Above all it is ordinary, future-oriented anticipation, waiting for hour after hour, shift after shift, for someone or something - an explosion, a suicide bomber, the end of the shift – which may or may not arrive. It is ordinary, banal and often rather boring.

This part of the thesis will explore the waiting and anticipating life of security practice. It will follow security staff as they work and wait, become bored and try to pass the time. In contrast to philosophical concepts of boredom and waiting as existential disenchantment (Heidegger 1995) or duration (Bergson 2005), this part follows Lars Svendsen in exploring boredom as “situative” experience (Svendsen 2005) embedded within everyday action. In doing so it seeks to examine and evoke

security as a particular kind of temporality and felt experience, shot through with boredom, anticipation and anxiety. It will explore how security staff experience and deal with boredom and waiting as well as the tactics they employ in order to stay attentive and alert.

Imagine waiting for the next person to check, for the end of the shift or for a potential terrorist to arrive. Imagine waiting and becoming bored, slipping into inertia and trying to stay alert, employing all kinds of games or pastimes only to find oneself still waiting with boredom seeping in once again. Waiting and anticipating and waiting.

Boredom

At security checks on the streets and pavements of central Tel Aviv security staff keep watch as guards and gatekeepers. They stand, sit and search at doorways to public events and street-corner cafes, supermarkets and shopping malls, checking people and purses for weapons and explosives.

In amongst other security staff at other points and places about town I spent several months visiting Adam, a security guard at the station, an avid army and weapons enthusiast and a chatterbox. His hopes and dreams of joining the Israeli police force dashed due to his plump physique, Adam had worked for eight years as a security guard when we met. He patrolled an exterior perimeter of the building, pacing the pavement between three heavily used entranceways and exits. Adam is responsible for keeping watch, looking for people without legal papers and spotting potential terrorist suspects, keeping an eye on drunks and delinquents, making sure *selectorim* have everything they need and responding to their radio calls for help. As he patrolled, slowly plodding up and down his security sector past shops and people and service taxis I would be trotting alongside. As he stood at gateways and barriers, looking out and surveilling the scene for suspicious characters I would be standing by his side. I was never certain just how effective or useful my shadow-like

anthropology tactics were, as I followed what Adam did, walked when Adam walked, stood still when he stood still, asked questions and chatted or passed long periods of time in silence. But it did enable a particular experience of security shifts, penetrating the poky practices, the working and waiting world of security guards and selectors.

Such shadowing strategies opened up opportunities for conversation and fieldwork with various guards, selectors, shop keepers and characters that we met along the way, often being taken for a stranger, a strange person, and/or Adam's strange new girlfriend. It seems that the most plausible explanation in among the array of possible reasons why I was spending day after day with Adam was love. Why else, they all surmised, would I follow him hour after hour, day after day, repeating the same actions and activities? On first impressions and according to most interpretations and people I spoke with *bitachon* itself was boring and dull; it simply did not warrant the degree of attention I was giving it. Romance seemed the most rational reason.

It was through these conversations and brief exchanges on the job that boredom made its reverberations felt. Through guards like Uri, an Ethiopian Israeli student, pausing during a patrol, leaning against the wall beside me and cradling the gun slung across his chest. "Wow it is boring. Have you ever seen a film again and again? That is what it is here, every day the same thing and the same people hanging around here" he said by way of a weary greeting. It was through daily interactions at security checks and doors that I first picked up on boring-talk, as security staff talked to one another and to me or responded to my cheery "How are you?" with a brusque "*Ze mesha'amem*", "It's boring", or when "I am bored" cropped up as a plain and simple statement of fact in among small talk snatched between the busyness of checks and checking. In this way the boredom of doing *bitachon* articulates and acts as an "all-purpose term of disapproval" (Spacks 1995: 10). Gripes and grievances revolved around a recurring sense of boredom and frustration. Besides the boring-talk security staff slumped in their chairs or shuffled from place to place, yawned, fiddled with their *magnometers* or guns, stared into space, stamped their feet and sneaked cigarettes throughout their shifts, regularly complaining about the "*ze*

mesha'amem" of it all. These moments of boredom's articulation as "It's boring" or "I am bored" were fleeting, short and succinct, confined to only a few words here and there. And yet there may be a great deal to be gained by paying attention to these commentaries on security's unspectacular, boring ordinariness, together with the tasks and activities they generated, depictions of faces, bodies and movement.

No sooner did boredom surface and Adam moan "I am bored" than some small activity or absurdity began. After becoming bored one day our silence is interrupted by a small, stocky, bronze skinned guy wearing a kipa who saunters over and greets Adam. "You must meet this guy" says Adam, stopping their conversation, introducing the newcomer as "*Rosh hamemshallah*", "The Prime Minister" and shaking his hand. Another security guard arrives. They play with the "Prime Minister", patting him on the back, calling him "*shishia*", "crazy" and asking him questions. "Where is the Prime Minister today?" asks one, "What are your duties today" enquires another. "What is 2321?" asks another, encouraging him to decipher fictional codes. Another security guard sneaks up on "*Rosh hamemshallah*" from behind and says hello. There is laughter all around and clearly this character is known to them all. He laughs along but I wonder whether he realises the joke is on him? Later on Adam tells me the man thinks or pretends that he works with a top branch of the security services responsible for the personal protection of the PM. But in reality he runs errands about town, dispatching supermarket orders and deliveries. "He is *shishia sof haderech*", "He is the ultimate weirdo" says Adam. Adam and Dudi, another security guard, have created hierarchies of *shishiot* (plural), from the basic "*shishia*", "crazy person" to "*shishia complet*" "total crazy person", "*super shishia*" and finally "*shishia sof haderech*".

Derived from the number six, the name of a mental asylum and used by the police as a codeword for crazy person, *shishia* had been adopted by Adam, Dudi and several other security staff, incorporating it into their own security vocabulary and daily distractions. *Shishia* was simultaneously a practical synonym and symbol of their expertise as well as a secretive way of making fun; part of the day-to-day *bitachon* lexicon. "Oi va voy!" Adam or Dudi would cry at the arrival of one or more *shishiot*

– the various “weirdos” and colourful characters who stopped by the station, accompanied by much tongue-tutting, a nod and a wink in my direction. It was also the popular name or description given to almost every security guard and *selector* save themselves. *Shishia*, I soon discovered, was both a term of endearment and a teasing term of offence. Above all it signalled action, a new focus of attention and activity.

“Look *shishiot*” Adam would say as we walked past some unsavoury character or other, someone acting oddly - “the whistling man” who whistles to himself as he delves into the rubbish bins, or the lady who always aggressively rattles her cup in Adam’s face, demanding attention and small change, or the Prime Minister’s personal crack commando - twirling his finger beside his temple, making a “drrrrr” sound and crying “Cuckoo!”.

Shishiot played a starring role in their unique brand of bullying humour, repository of small activities and interludes that arose as soon as things became boring. No one was exempt, not the security staff “He is a bit *shishia*”, “She works hard but she is a bit cuckoo” and certainly not the resident anthropologist who was soon named “special *shishia*”. After all what could be crazier than loitering about with security staff all day? Anyone in their right mind knew it was just “normal”, boring and hardly interesting enough to credit academic attention. “You crazy lady?!” a *selector* asked one day, before promptly advising me to go and study something else.

The nickname stuck and I regularly arrived only to hear an “Oi va voy!” or “*Shishia!*” shouted out with a smile by Dudi or Adam, never quite certain whether I should laugh or take offence. Nor was I always a comfortable accomplice to their teasing, joking, *shishia* sessions. But occasionally the reasons for *shishia*’s enduring appeal became clear. During one of the “Prime Minister”’s visits for example, Adam told me about the day he had turned up at dawn and spent the entire shift with him, following him around in much the same manner as I was at the time. “He caused a lot of problems but the time passed like that” Adam said, snapping his fingers with a smile.

No longer standing or strolling with Adam and other security staff but back behind an Edinburgh desk and flicking through field notes I found that boredom cropped up again and again. Boredom appeared as a salient aspect of *bitachon*, but perhaps because of the ordinariness of boredom I had done little more than jot down when guards and *selectorim* said they were bored, what we were doing at the time and then promptly forgot all about it, probably as more interesting incidents came along. As Lori Jervis points out “despite its ubiquity in contemporary cosmopolitan societies, boredom has generally been considered an ordinary, trivial and inevitable state of being” overlooked and under-analysed (Jervis et al 2003: 38). Boredom is obscured by its very ordinariness.

Moreover, anthropological approaches to conflict and violence have tended to neglect the ordinary in their pursuit of the peculiar and spectacular (Kelly 2008). Such studies (for example Nordstrom and Martin 1992, Nordstrom and Robben 1995) often centre on the exceptional and extraordinary moment of violence or its memory, leaving little room for the ordinary ways in and through which much conflict is lived. An academic focus on making the apparently strange and spectacular more comprehensible and mundane draws attention away from the other side of the dialectic; the ways in which we may learn from the oddities of the ordinary, the everyday practices through which the mundane may underscore the strange. This part of the thesis runs counter to such dichotomous discussions and explores the strange within the mundane, aiming to tease out moments where we might grasp the “ordinariness of the extraordinary” (Taussig 1984: 477) and the extraordinariness of the ordinary. Conflict may also be mundane and even rather boring. As I argued in the introduction to this thesis, in order to comprehend lives lived through conflict, an exploration of the ordinary is just as crucial as the seemingly exceptional.

Critically, as Veena Das argues, the ordinary and mundane or boring should not be perceived in opposition to violence but as entities or experiences that may be profoundly imbricated and intertwined (Das 2007, Kelly 2008). The ordinary is not

an apolitical abstraction but is the very place where conflict and politics plays out, pierced by complex fears, meanings and motivations. *Bitachon*, or the boredom of *bitachon* should be understood not as the stuff of spectacular violence nor its absolute absence but as holding the two in tension. Violence always threatens and it is this peculiar potentiality that this section attempts to capture and convey.

For Tel Avivians with recent memories and experiences of suicide bombings in the city and armed conflicts in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza the desire for ordinary life takes place in a context where conflict has become routinized and normalised. Civility and the search for the ordinary is bound up with processes and practices of security and perceptions that no matter how strong the Israeli military, “separation barrier” and secret security services, a suicide bomber may always, possibly slip through. As such street level security guards are in large part a reflection of this search for ordinary life. This is not to say that seeking to understand acute violence, how and why people take part in wars and violent acts is not imperative. Rather, as Tobias Kelly (2008) argues a focus on extraordinary violence presents only a particular, narrow point of view, neglecting the peculiar mix of boredom and fear that mark many conflicts. While writing about the seemingly mundane may not present as exciting a prospect or appear as instantly engaging as explosive flashes of violence, it is equally important. Violence is always lurking beneath the banal, with the potential to re-emerge re-surface in ever more extreme forms.

Violence in the lived world, as Pradeep Jeganathan points out, unfolds in two temporal dimensions: past and future, “embedded in fields of recollection and anticipation” (Jeganathan 2004: 70). To pass through a security check, to recall violence, may also be a moment of anticipation of violence to come, marking the possibility or potentiality of violence’s explosive arrival and emergence in the world. It is to such anticipatory moments that this discussion attends.

If we are to understand how people act and react in violent contexts, why people turn to armed conflict or support military action we must also understand the ways in which violence is anticipated and waited upon. *Bitachon*, as this part argues, is a kind

of waiting, a particular tiresome temporality and something felt. Indeed, the mixture of boredom and fear that runs through the ordinariness of security reveals a profound normalisation at the conceptual and experiential contours of conflict. The ordinary, when reflected upon, may appear extra-ordinary. The ordinary may slip and slide into the extraordinary. The banal may prefigure exceptional events. It is necessary temporarily to turn our ethnographic sights from the spectacular peaks of violence and security and explore the more mundane practices and perspectives of security and security guards, the ordinary boredom through which violence may be waited, anticipated and played out.

“*Ze mesha’amem*” or “I am bored” emerged with recurring regularity. For my security guard informants *bitachon* is mostly about waiting and when one can take a toilet break. It is about enduring and complaining, about aches and pains and long hours. It is about sneaking a smoke, checking out women, bending over bags, playing with *shishiot* and filling the football pools. *Bitachon* is banal, tedious and tiresome. *Bitachon* may simply be boring.

If boredom only emerges as a short, sharp “I am bored” or “It’s boring” with little further explanation or explication, if, as Lars Svendsen (2005) suggests, boredom is a vague and ambiguous phenomenon, then how does one go about exploring and writing it ethnographically? Firstly there is the simple danger that my presence will drive boredom away. For example, if boredom became too much there was sometimes an anthropologist on hand to entertain. For a few weeks Ben, another volunteer with the civil guard, did a few weeks of night-time security guarding at a local café, moonlighting from his day job in order to earn some extra cash. He often stopped me as I passed by on my way to the grocery store or coming home from the gym, complaining about feeling bored, pulling up a chair and plying me with cigarettes. Sometimes security staff would visibly perk up, pleased to “have someone to speak with” as Eli said, retired, working as a security guard for extra cash, and about to embark on another solo shift outside a central café. He sits and stands, staring out behind some retro aviator shades. “It’s a change in the routine” Adam said when feeling amiable towards his anthropologist shadow. But it was only a

matter of time before he had patrolled and re-patrolled and remarked once again at the dulling “*ze mesha’amem*” of the day. “Time really passes when you are around” security guard Smadar said with a smile during one of my visits to her rather lonely train station outpost. “All I have to talk to is Tsvi”, she said nodding in the direction of a non-security colleague asleep and snoring in a chair, “and what use is he?!”. But it was never long before boredom surfaced, circulated and came back to the fore.

Secondly, how can I distinguish between my informants’ boredom and my own boredom, the boredom that arises in the doing of anthropology itself? In among my jottings about security guards and boredom are my own bored reflections, noted down during coffee breaks and bus journeys. “Routine, boredom, boredom and routine. I am bored after an hour or so. The main action happened at the beginning of the shift, and now nothing. Just the rain and the cold” I wrote during a particularly miserable moment at the bus station. As anthropologists we return from destinations near and far, exchange interesting anecdotes and exciting experiences and set about our writing. What we tend to forget through the focussed processes of analysis and writing-up, or simply do not talk or write about, is that much of fieldwork is inherently boring. Field research may be engaging, dangerous or thrilling but it is also about tedious hours hanging around, waiting about and the dullness of daily activity. We may lose ourselves in passionate research, have fun and fall in love, but we also get bored and anxious, twiddle our thumbs and avoid our work, “wade into paddy fields, get sick and read bad novels rather than confront another day of mounting misapprehensions” (Spencer 1989: 160).

Finally, to write boredom claims a degree of interest and to read what has been written implies one is interested (at least in the first instance) (Anderson 2004, Spacks 1995). As Roland Barthes argues, the act of writing alleviates the boredom of the writer and implicitly promises to interest the reader, while the reader keeps their side of the boredom bargain by agreeing allow themselves to be interested (Barthes 1975). One risks either writing boredom so well that one loses interest in the work oneself and bores one’s readers, or become so engaged that we lose a sense of the

dulling dimensions of bored experience. As such I aim to explore and evoke and bore a bit, but not too much.

Boredom's beginnings

Boredom may have been neglected within anthropology but it has a lively literary and philosophical life elsewhere. Much of the literature suggests boredom is a fairly recent cultural construct, emerging as a distinct concept, if not an experiential event, from the onset of modernity (see for example Healey 1984, Jervis et al 2003, Klapp 1986, Musharbash 2007, Svendsen 2005). Svendsen (2005: 21) calls boredom the “privilege” of modern man, arguing that before 18th century Romanticism boredom was a marginal experience, largely the preserve of monks and the aristocracy. Indeed, boredom's beginnings can be traced back to the medieval concept of *acedia*. Closely linked with notions of religious and social morality as well as the sin of sloth, in medieval Christian terminology *acedia* is a “dangerous form of spiritual alienation, a misery of the soul” a state of precarious idleness or sinful apathy (Spacks 1995: 11). It is associated with the midday demon or Noontide, an apparition believed to prey on monks, tempt and turn them away from their righteous path. According to this theological line of reasoning the errant and apathetic individual is held morally responsible for his or her own spiritual demise. For the vigilant monk feelings of *acedia* must be controlled, mastered and overcome through a combination of virtuous effort and religious devotion (Spacks 1995, Svendsen 2005).

During the Renaissance *melancholy* takes over; a concept and feeling which now also afflicts the aristocracy. Whereas *acedia* is a negative notion, linked with morality and a malady of the soul, *melancholy* is more ambiguous, denoting a natural bodily affliction closely identified with illness and even wisdom (Musharbash 2007, Spacks 1995, Svendsen 2005).

It is with the onset of modernity, so the cultural constructivist thesis goes, that boredom really flourishes. The word boredom has no clear English etymology, appearing as Patricia Spacks notes, from the mid-eighteenth century (Spacks 1995:

13). The appearance of “Bore” as a noun for a thing that bores originates from 1778, using “bore” with reference to a tiresome person dates from 1812 and the first use of the word “boredom” is recorded in 1864 (Spacks 1995). The problem of boredom in Western philosophy and literature is deeply rooted in Romanticism (Svendsen 2005). Boredom, as I have discussed, was previously the sole prerogative of monks and the aristocratic elite; those with enough idle leisure time or the moral and material basis for boredom. Or as Kierkegaard puts it, “Those who bore others are the plebeians, the crowd, the endless train of humanity in general; those who bore themselves are the chosen ones, the nobility” (Kierkegaard 1987: 288). However, with the advent of modernity a series of extensive conceptual transformations were set in motion: 1) secularization and “the growing metaphysical void” (Healey 1984); 2) individualism and introspection (Jervis et al 1997, Spacks 1995, Svendsen 2005); 3) the rise of capitalism and a subsequent distinction between work and leisure time; 4) a concurrent “right” or entitlement to individual happiness (Anderson 2004, Klapp 1986, Spacks 1995); 5) affluence, consumerism and information “overload” produced by expanding media markets; and 6) temporal bureaucracy – the “standardised, standardizing organization of time-space” (Anderson 2004: 471). As Svendsen (2005) suggests, these radical transformations underpinned modernity, ushering in an age in which boredom went democratic. Not only the monks in the abbey or the aristocratic elite but everyone, could now be bored: “Society is now one polish’d horde / Formed of two mighty tribes, the *Bores* and *Bored*” (Byron 1819-1824 789; *Don Juan* 13; 756-60).

Writers such as Austen, Beckett, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, Pessoa, Proust and Stein take boredom as their literary inspiration (Spacks 1995, Svendsen 2005). Literary theorists have charted boredom’s rise as a cultural and literary construct within Western literature (Kuhn 1976, Spacks 1995) and psychologists such as Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and Vodanovich and Watt (1999) have investigated boredom as a cognitive personality type. Philosophers from Kant to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Adorno have discussed boredom as a fundamental metaphysical problem. Sociologists have written on the social meanings of boredom (Barbalet 1999), boredom springing from lives lived within a nexus of speedy time-

space, unfulfilled dreams, promises of mass prosperity and pleasure (Brissett and Snow 1993), and boredom in the world of US undergraduate life (Conrad 1997) among others. While this literature tells us much about boredom's genesis within the conceptual and material drive toward "modernity", it tells us little about how boredom might be experienced. Or, how boredom may be perceived by other people in other places and times. Anthropology has provided little in terms of comparison or questioning this modern concept or existential monopoly within academic analyses. How and where else may people be bored?

Security as a kind of waiting

How does one go about exploring boredom and *bitachon*? Boredom, by its very vague indeterminacy does not lend itself to verbalisation beyond the basics, especially if the speaker is not interested in dwelling on their being bored. To simply say "I am bored" or "*ze mesha'amem*" does not actually say very much. Or does it?

During one of my Adam accompanying sessions for instance, we cover the usual stretch of pavement; past the twins selling cell phones, the dustbins, the tee shirts going for twenty shekels and packs of underpants, the fake plastic flower shop and a group of teenage boys sat on a step. As we reach a security gate Adam stops, puts his hand on his gun and watches people crossing the dual carriageway and coming our way. We begin chatting with Anna, a female *selector* in her thirties, hair falling from her pony tail, busily unzipping bags with a scowl across her face. She is not amused by Adam's attempts at gentle humour and instead of laughing laments the slowness of her shift, "I feel the day is just not going and yesterday for example I could not wait for the day to finish and I was looking at my watch every five minutes saying please let the day pass" she says. Such claims to boredom were always accompanied by behaviours, habits, activities and time. Boredom arouses and acquires a kind of physical and temporal presence, marking its arrival with Ravit's restless *magometer* swinging, sitting, standing and smoking, or with Anna's constant clock watching and longing for time to pass. It is here that we can begin to apprehend boredom as a

result of and a route into seeing security as a particular kind of anticipatory activity or waiting.

Peter Conrad's suggestion that boredom is a "gloss" for what is going on, and Veena Das's work on pain may be helpful here (Conrad 1997: 469, Das, 1997, 1998). For Das, exploring Wittgenstein's thoughts or philosophical grammar on pain, the saying of "I am in pain" is not simply a "statement of fact but is also an expression of that fact"; it is a declaration of felt experience (Das 1998: 191, Cavell 1997).

Wittgenstein suggests pain is not an inexpressible, internal, incommunicable something held within but is the "beginning of a language game" (Das 1997: 70). Rather than representing the unutterable or indescribable that destroys communication, "I am in pain" is a declaration, a claim to communication and a demand for acknowledgement that may be granted or denied (Das 1997). As such pain is not pointing to a purely private state or emotion, an internal or inner object; rather its communication suggests a deeply social kind of relation. I take "I am bored" as such a claim to acknowledgment, as a communicative statement or complaint and my ethnographic explorations as the unravelling of these social relations. This kind of boredom expresses a longing for something, a discomfort with what is. It is a declaration of boring *bitachon* and restless bodies bored, a complaint and claim to the strange temporality or felt experience of waiting – waiting for the next person to check, waiting for the shift to finish, looking at one's watch every five minutes, or just, simply, waiting.

The rapid rhythms of work, checking people and bags, scanning crowds and searching commuters are shot through with a slower security beat, with a present that becomes a prolonged, bored, protracted waiting. But this is not waiting as a passage of time to be traversed. This is time as sticky and slow. This is waiting that must be endured. This is boredom as a blockage (Svendsen 2005).

In general, security staff were nonchalant and pragmatic in their descriptions and depictions of security, their replies echoing the rapid rhythm of checking bodies and bags for bombs. "We must protect people, to make them feel safe" they'd reply to

my initial enquiries about danger, threats and fears, answering instead with quick-fire lists of particular duties and practical tasks: “I check bags”, “I patrol this level”, “I take the *magnometer* like this and I check peoples bodies here and here, like this”, “I look inside bags, I look at what people are wearing, I check for weapons, that is all”. Yet at the same time the same guards and selectors moaned “*ze mesha’amem*” or “I am bored”, complained and commented “I am like a robot; I just check bags” and reflected that even if a suicide bomber were to arrive there is little they could do, save perhaps limit the impact by stopping an attacker at the security check. On the one hand highlighting importance and expertise while feeling insignificant – “I just check bags” – or ultimately ineffectual on the other. Security, as I discuss in part two, is about the taking and taming of risks. It is about controlling danger, managing populations and making the unpredictable - the bomb, the terrorist, the suicide attack - predictable and preventable. Yet it seems one cannot create safe space after all, one cannot fully predict violence’s explosive arrival. Claims to pragmatic importance were coloured by disjuncture and disenchantment, incongruities between intention and experience, and the sense that one cannot or is not quite really doing or providing *bitachon* at all.

As such boredom and *bitachon* is always about activity and the doing but it is also a bit about the meaning; the background or context in which it takes place. It is in this situative disjuncture or juxtaposition, I suggest, between the expectations of security staff and *bitachon*’s slow, sticky, waiting time that boredom is born. For those whose work locates boredom as a peculiarly modern phenomenon to do with secularization, the narcissistic quest for self-realization, the belief in a right to happiness, an acute awareness of when one is not happy, the work-leisure dichotomy, “overload” and the standardization of time organization precipitates a profound gap between life expectations and the realities of living (Conrad 1999, Jervis et al 2003, Svendsen 2005). The modern subject’s search for “meaning” is frustrated and boredom bubbles up as an absence or “profound subjective malaise” (Anderson 2004: 741), as emptiness, anomie and metaphysical disenchantment (Healey 1984, Spacks 1995, Svendsen 2005). Indeed boredom “appears to be, ultimately a problem of meaning” suggest Jervis and colleagues (2003: 38). Without meaning we are bored and the

result is an all-pervasive absence, disaffection and discontent. But as I argue throughout this section, this is only part of the story and a rather abstract and existential one at that, missing the deeply situative and social dimensions of a *bitachon*-boredom born of waiting time.

After several hours of standing and strolling with Adam one day, he comes to a halt by a motorbike parked beside the building, sits down, bows his head, sighs, stretches out his legs and says “It is boring. Sometimes you wonder what you are doing, in fact a lot of the time. There is no future in this work”. Boredom as blockage, as goals and expectations that are not met, came in many guises and for some security staff *bitachon* simply meant being stuck or in-between; wanting to be a policeman like Adam, saving up for college like security guard Nadav, fresh from the army and in need of cash, or waiting to train as a hairdresser like *selector* Tamar, working in security while she awaits her dream job. In conversation Adam sorts security staff into groups: 1) people who have just finished army service, who already have all the security skills and want to earn money for university or before starting another job, 2) retirees and new immigrants “they are old usually, they work in the restaurants, supermarkets and places like this, in banks. They sit, they have a few hours...it’s nothing”, and finally 3) students who are working part-time or people who are “in-between” other jobs. Then, finally, there were people like Adam who “began this job as something in-between and then became stuck” he sighs and shrugs his shoulders.

Such poky security jobs were sometimes a stop-gap for job-seekers or a part-time practice for army leavers who work in security for a while then leave to follow other jobs, university courses and careers. At one of my field sites younger guards both respected and scoffed at Guy, a veteran security guard who began in-between and then, like Adam, got stuck in *bitachon*. These kinds of security work are often low-status and poorly paid unlike the government’s secret service crack units or large private companies securing the airport or docks. This was street-level security outside supermarkets, shopping malls and cinemas. Exploitation and underhand employment practices were rife with some high-profile cases hitting the national headlines. Security companies regularly hired staff on an annual contract and then

made people redundant right before the end, before benefits and severance pay become legally binding and then promptly offered to take them back for another year. Not only did time stick and seem not to pass but for some security staff *bitachon* was a sticky, suspended, in-between period of life.

And so behind the rapid rhythms of quick checks and queues, *magnometer* swipes and bag searches, between the expertise and expectations, between the hustle, bustle and activity lies the prolonged pulse of inactivity, sitting, standing and waiting for someone or something to arrive. Waiting in-between or being bored. Waiting slows and time becomes sticky and boredom is felt as a blockage, preventing you from doing what you want or need to do; a sense of being stuck or suspended. And in the meantime all one can do is work, watch and wait.

Philosophy and feeling bored

Broadly speaking, boredom as conceived in literary and philosophical circles has been divided into boredom as a reaction to or an experience of the particular and boredom as a state of being. Martin Doehlemann outlines four types of boredom: boredom that arises in a particular situation, the boredom of satiety, existential boredom and creative boredom (1991: 22-23). The French novelist Gustave Flaubert writes about *ennui commun* and *ennui moderne*, roughly corresponding to situative and existential boredom respectively (Spacks 1995). Lars Svendsen's insightful *Philosophy of Boredom* (2005) rests on this contrast between boredom as a "situative" and/or existential phenomenon, and provides a particularly helpful conceptual centre round which to orient discussion. Since *bitachon* boredom appears to arise through the particular practices, experience and situation of security as a kind of waiting, blockage and endurance, I largely focus on the former, situative boredom of security.

Martin Heidegger presents one of the most comprehensive philosophical analyses of boredom as a matter of disposition and disenchantment (Heidegger 1995). What sets

Heidegger's analysis apart from other rationalist or cognitive traditions is his commentary on mood or disposition. Boredom as a specific mood is not simply an "inner" cognitive phenomenon colouring perception of the world. A mood is a fundamental means by which humans dwell in the world, setting the parameters and possibilities of self and place, thought and action, "moods carry us into the world, and, as it were, carry the world within us" (Thiele 1997: 497, Svendsen 2005: 115)³. *Dasein*, literally meaning being-there, being-in-the-world (beings such as humans), captures this sense in which living is experienced through dispositions and dwelling in the world.

Heidegger takes boredom to be an elemental metaphysical mood distinguishing between 'being bored with something' (*gelangweltwerden von etwas*) and 'boring oneself with something' (*sichlangweilen bei etwas*). These are two extreme points on a boredom-continuum that begins with a kind of superficial situative boredom where the culprit is known (this man, this book, this journey), progressing to a more profound boredom where the cause of boredom is more ambiguous, stemming from within *Dasein* itself, and finally arrives at an overwhelming existential boredom where in familiar tautological style Heidegger suggests that what bores us is quite simply *das Langweilende*, the boring, itself (Heidegger 1995, Svendsen 2005).

Heidegger is primarily concerned with the latter profound existential boredom within which the meaning-conveying mood that mediates or structures relations between subject and object, between *Dasein* and the world, has simply disappeared. Boredom signifies all the disinterest and disenchantment, restlessness, irritability and discomfort of the mood and meaning-less void (Barbalet 1999, Jervis et al 2003, Heidegger 1995, Svendsen 2005). Drifting "hither and thither in the abysses of existence like a mute fog" (Heidegger 1949: 364) one experiences a kind of meaninglessness or "nothing" (Raposa 1999: 60), commensurable with losing one's bearings or being set adrift in the world. One is left face to face with one's own existential self. But security staff do not seem to be drifting about in a bewildering existential cloud, a point I return to below.

³ For a more comprehensive discussion of Heidegger's phenomenology, *Dasein* and moods see Thiele 1997.

This existential kind of boredom, according to Heidegger, contains a crucial emancipatory element; a route into revelatory metaphysics. Boredom may lead to a liberating phenomenology or “transcendental subjectivity” (Gell 1992: 265). In other words, the experience of boredom opens up the potential for a radical counter-movement, a turn from “inauthentic”, ordinary and everyday understanding of the world, towards an “authentic” self-revelatory Moment of vision (*Augenblick*). Confronted with the *unheimlich* and unsettling nothingness or meaninglessness of boredom *Dasein* encounters a self stripped bare and comes face to face with the horizons of selfhood; the very possibility for being (Heidegger 1995, Svendsen 2005). In this way Heidegger brings together boredom with early Christian notions of *parousia* (Christ’s second coming) and *kairos* (the moment of vigilant and insightful waiting) in one Moment of meaning-full revelation, “*kairos* and *parousia* become one and the same, and the goal is to be vigilant as one regards one’s own self” (Svendsen 2005: 124). And yet it is unclear, given boredom’s tedious inalienability, where the catalyst for such a transcendental turn-around comes from (Svendsen 2005: 13). How does a state of such profound detachment contain the possibilities for such a radical counter-movement?

More importantly for our purposes, Adam, Uri, Anna and the others do not, to my knowledge – since I am not concerned with psychic or philosophical speculations but with peoples’ actions and activities and what they themselves reveal to me in the field – engage in profound philosophising as they stand at the security check, contemplating the insufferability of it all or reflecting on their own existential dissonance. Their “I am bored” is embedded in the doing of *bitachon*. It is Svendsen’s situative boredom as opposed to Heidegger’s existential angst.

Heidegger appears to dismiss this more banal, worldly boredom, preferring to turn the ordinary into the extra-ordinary, bestowing upon boredom a great expression of Being and the grand ontological capacities of a transcendental philosophy. In doing so, as Svendsen suggests, he is “constantly in danger of overlooking the ontic (beings) in favour of the ontological (being)” (Svendsen 2005: 131). At variance with

more existential inclinations the security materials are firmly grounded in the ontic, pointing to the activity as opposed to the ontology of boredom. For boredom is not just a metaphysical state of mind: “it is also a characteristic of the world, for we participate in social practices that are saturated with boredom” (Svendsen 2005: 15). Boredom emerges not in the vast emptiness of existence but through the situation, sociality and emotionality of security practice; in security as a particular kind of waiting.

As such, the waiting security guard, the security guard who has become bored, is restless. Ravit sits on her chair, drinks, fidgets, stands, smokes, sits, checks her radio and smokes again. A group of selectors set up a paper-throwing competition aiming screwed up balls of chewing gum wrapper at a nearby litter bin. Others light cigarettes, caving in to nicotine cravings and sneaking a clandestine puff while waiting, balancing the cigarette on a table edge as they search bags and wave *magmometers* over bodies, or sit slumped in chairs, staring and smoking steadily. “See how much I smoke?!” cried David, a *selector*, one day, brandishing his packet of Winston blues and blaming the boredom for his growing pack a day habit. Others lift feet, arch backs, stretch arms and scratch buttocks, limbering up with stiff legs, moaning about whatever work induced ailment is troubling them at the time. Dudi paces this way and that, Anna checks her watch, Ravit rubs her back.

Vladimir performs this restlessness at the start of Beckett’s second act in *Waiting for Godot*, “He remains a moment silent and motionless, then begins to move feverishly about the stage. He halts before the tree, comes and goes, before the boots, comes and goes, halts extreme right, gazes into distance...” (Beckett 2006: 49). Waiting or enduring seems uncomfortable and agitating, security staff complain, they fidget, they pace and they consult their watches. They seek distraction, interrupting the slow, sticky, plodding pulse of waiting time.

Duration

Like the temporality of modernity, with technologies - laptops, blackberries, iPhones - delivering information without making us wait, the rapid rhythms and busyness of *bitachon* are swift, almost instantaneous, like the movement of the camera's shutter (see Virilio 2004, Schweizer 2008). But beneath this quick beat of activity and speedy "I check bags", "I patrol this level" pragmatism lays a more ponderous pendulum movement for the security guard who waits. This is not Newton's calibrated and chronometric clock time but the immeasurable content of time, time as felt not calculated, time as monotonous and tedious, as experienced and endured. This is not the cognitive concept of time but the wait as lived. "For the person who waits", writes Harold Schweizer in his erudite exploration of waiting, "space tediously expands and time slows down" (2008: 7). For Anna standing at a security check it seems her shift is simply not passing as she glances at her watch and wills the time to proceed. For Uri it is the monotonous slowness of the same "it is so boring...every day the same thing and the same people hanging around here". For the French activist and philosopher Simone Weil such temporal monotony may be both beautiful and abhorrent, "The most beautiful if it is a reflection of eternity – the most atrocious if it is the sign of unvarying perpetuity. It is time surpassed or time sterilized" (2005: 179).

It is this quality of waiting that Samuel Beckett conjures within *Waiting for Godot*. The play, its two protagonists and its audience "enacts, performs, requires" waiting (Schweizer 2008: 9). Beckett condenses and turns waiting into nothing more than time, as we follow and we feel not how we pass through time but how we are in it, not in expectation but in endurance. In *Waiting for Godot* the two tramps "Simply wait" as Estragon says, but they know and we know that Godot will not arrive. In *Waiting for Godot* it is the waiting not Godot that forms the theatrical focus. It is not the threat so much as security as waiting that is my ethnographic focus. Not the object or person that might arrive but the present, prolonged, process of waiting.

Beckett creates a kind of “negative *kairos*” (Adorno 1997: 30), capturing the waiting moment which never ends, which continues in prolonged perpetuity. “One knows what to expect”, says Estragon; “No further need to worry”, says Vladimir; “Simply wait” says Estragon (Beckett 2006: 27, 31). It is this waiting, this empty endurance of time and temporality that resonates in the absurdity and restless clown-like antics of the characters’ gestures and actions – gazing into the distance, peering into a hat, looking into a boot, staring this way and that, fighting and arguing and pacing to and fro. They are waiting, but it is difficult to conceive of waiting without invoking an idea, an object, an expectation, or some “Godin...Godet...Godot” as Pozzo – a pocket watch wearing character – suggests for whom one awaits (Beckett 2006: 69, Schweizer 2008: 10). They just wait. It is time suspended, it is time sterilized.

Henri Bergson also evokes this qualitative waiting with a lump of sugar. Wanting to mix a glass of sugar and water Bergson reflects that like it or not he must wait, “I must, willy-nilly, wait until the sugar melts” (2005: 12-13). Such time, Bergson realises, cannot be quantified or calculated by clock, time is sticky and slow, time is simply duration. And so he must wait for the sugar to dissolve. He cannot protract or contract this duration at his will, he cannot measure and adjust this duration to suit his desire. “It is no longer *thought*, it is something *lived*”, and so Bergson must experience, embody and endure his waiting (Bergson 2005: 12-13). As such waiting appears much more than a particular amount of time – the time taken for the sugar to melt – it is experienced time. It is waiting time through which the waiter feels and senses his own being. The duration is his duration. The waiting is his wait. “It is we who are passing when we say time passes” writes Bergson in his *Duration and Simultaneity* (2002: 216). And so willy-nilly the waiter waits, vacillates and agitates, he paces, he looks at his watch and he waits once more.

Like Bergson and his lump of sugar security staff must experience and endure their waiting. Boredom, as we will see, emerges when time is felt not thought, through a particular situation, though security as a particular kind of waiting. “It is boring” says Adam, “I am bored” says Anna, “It is boring” says Uri. “We wait. We are bored”, says Vladimir, “No, don’t protest, we are bored to death, there’s no denying it”

(Beckett 2006: 73). Yet unlike the rather existential revelations of waiting simply endured, security staff are waiting with a preposition, waiting as ordinary intentional action, waiting for a violence that may or may not come. It is an active, anticipatory waiting marked by perhaps, potential and possibility, but in the meantime they must willy-nilly wait. How long are they waiting? How do they get bored? What are they waiting for? What do they do and how do they endure their waiting? How long before boredom begins?

This quality of waiting is present too in the kinds of creeping claustrophobia and trepidation that dominate the waiting lives of Vincent Crapanzano's white, Wyndal residents (1985). In 1980s South Africa waiting is a pernicious endeavour and for the whites of Wyndal it is suffused with a pervasive, primordial dread within which time and even life itself is suspended (Crapanzano 1985). Waiting, he writes, prolongs or lingers in the present, numbing, muted, dead and yet filled with desire, "In its positive modality, it is directed towards something that is desired: it is longing. In its negative modality, it is directed towards something that is not desired: it is dread" (Crapanzano 1985: 46).

Crapanzano evokes the suffocating climate of life in a small agricultural Cape village, living with and within the complex racial segregation, categorization and dominance that is apartheid. For the "dominant" whites, waiting is oriented towards an ambiguous future day of reckoning on which the distortions of apartheid will be overturned. "Flash points" of violent protest and police brutality/retribution in the cities act as portents of an apocalyptic future, but in the meantime the whites simply wait. The project, object or intention of such waiting, is not given but hidden, terrifying and unknowable. The present is constructed, as his informant "Carl" puts it, as an endless "waiting for something, anything to happen" and put an end to the uncertain terror and tedium of waiting itself (Crapanzano 1985: 43).

Crapanzano conjures lives coloured by stoical conservatism, by labouring, by stories of Boer War heroism, Great Trek tales and British tyranny. He describes racial segregation, peoples' intimate attachments to home and place, and the stark beauty of

the South African landscape. He evokes tensions between the puritanical Dutch Reform Church and a blossoming evangelism. He writes a world in which the racial other and the act of waiting form a repository for projected fears and reflected moralities. For Crapanzano these practices, this Puritanism, this praying, this referral to the past, this waiting, is a “moral allegory” of the Wyndal whites living apartheid; a kind of suffering through which one attempts to flee the unbearability of waiting, atones and does penance, becoming “disciplined, hardened, stoical” South Africans trapped in the perhaps of waiting time (Crapanzano 1985: 46). There is nothing they can do but wait.

For Henri Bergson the experience of “pure duration” is similar to the lulling lilt of a musical phrase or melody that we can only fully apprehend if we listen to it as a whole, “with our eyes closed”, unconscious of its various constituent parts. To experience one’s waiting or existential enduring one must be entirely mentally absorbed, captivated and calmed by the melody of waiting (Bergson 2007: 123). A musical mistake or an interruption such as dwelling too long on a particular note is thus perceived not as a problem of length but by its effect on the entire musical phrase. Such disruption is a “qualitative change thereby caused in the whole of the musical phrase” as Bergson puts it (2001: 100-1), an apprehension aroused as the waiter becomes conscious of his or her duration and awakens from absorption in the music of waiting. Time is suddenly passing in tedious increments of clock time marked by frequent glances at one’s watch. The waiter briefly realises his or her own waiting being - uncomfortable, uncanny - and is reabsorbed, lulled by the melody of duration.

For Walter Benjamin, as Harold Schweizer suggests, listening to a story requires a similar kind of self-absorbed relaxation:

The process of assimilation, which takes place in depth, requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away (Benjamin 1968: 91, Schweizer 2008: 19).

But for the waiting security guard, in contrast, waiting is neither a musical melody nor the story listener. To wait is to be neither physically nor mentally relaxed, neither forgetful nor fully self-conscious but waiting with eyes open. The waiter is suspended, vacillating, shifting between absorption and awakedness, boredom and active attention. “You cannot be afraid, you must stay *erani*, alert” Anna told me in clipped tones. “You have to know what to look for” said Adam. “You have to be alert” said Dudi, his answers short and sharp. “You have to be ready” said Ravit. Security staff must be wide-awake and watchful in their waiting because who knew when violence may arrive? One must be ready not relaxed, alert not self-absorbed.

To be bored is to be too relaxed, to allow inertia and apathy to appear, to no longer be alert. As such it must be battled and blown away by restless responses, by stamping one’s feet and fidgeting. If for Bergson’s existential waiter the restless pacing and the looking at one’s watch are distractions to displace the often uncanny and uncomfortable experience of one’s own enduring existence, for the waiting security guard restlessly or compulsively complaining, pacing, stretching and smoking, fidgeting and fiddling it is an instrumental attempt to battle and banish boredom and to act – to chase the dream bird away.

To be bored, writes Cynthia Fisher, is to feel “an unpleasant transient state in which the individual feels a pervasive lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity” (1993: 396). The security guard is distracted not by uncanny existential discomfort but by the realization that attentiveness is waning. One cannot be bored, one cannot be afraid, one must remain alert. But to be absorbed or to be bored is to lose focus, fearing less the actual threat than the potential consequences of inertia and being un-alert, of missing the vital clues and tell-tale signs of a possible suspect. Fear, in this sense, may be boring. One must keep a watchful, vigilant wait. Yet as I have suggested the very act of waiting may lead to boredom. In this way restlessness is not an existential reaction so much as instrumental action. Actions and activities represent a flight from boredom towards alert and focussed observation. When the waiting body slips into boredom it helps to pace, sigh, stretch and wriggle oneself free.

Pastimes and attention

Dudi and Adam would pass time “watching the ladies” and passing comment, occasionally starting conversations but most often blurting “Oi va voy!” to one another as a good looking woman walked by. Surveilling and searching for danger has its people watching perks. You have “permission to watch” grinned Dudi one day, viewing his position as a licence to leer at a group of women walking past our post. Ravit, whom I often found waiting in exasperation for someone to relieve her for “*efes efes*”, “zero zero” - the code for a toilet trip - passed time by putting any break she could beg, borrow or sneak to good and extended use. She took me with her one day as she played truant for a few minutes, mumbling something about the toilet to a security guard and leaving him to man the check. She whisked me around various floors as she examined CDs, ate a bagel and used another *selector*’s radio to request a toilet break - the one she was already taking - and sat in the staffroom before returning to work. For a few weeks Dudi, Adam and I became *Winner* (football pools) fans, debating the odds and our jackpot dreams, scribbling on our betting forms and popping into the corner store – sticky buns, chewing gum and tobacco out front and gambling in the back - to place our bets.

If boredom, and all the lethargy and lack of concentration that boredom entails, is entwined with security, it is with security as a particular kind of waiting. It is “time’s invasion of your world system” (Brodsky 1995) emanating and circulating from uncertain and unpredictable waiting, saturating security experience. To stay alert becomes *bitachon*’s top priority because despite the calm of recent years, despite the infrequency of Tel Aviv terror attacks, one never knows whether what one is waiting for - the next person to check, the next suicide bomber - may just arrive. Waiting becomes the moment before something or someone that may or may not materialise. One must be prepared, alert, attentive and yet through the unpredictability of *bitachon*, between expertise and ineffectiveness, between activity and being stuck, boredom is encouraged, experienced and embodied. Security staff yawn, sigh and slip into the stickiness and sluggishness of waiting time. But one cannot be bored

because as Adam, Dudi, Anna and Ravit were all apt to remind me “You must be alert”.

Bitachon was full of all kinds of restless activities aimed at passing the time, *lehavir et hazman* (to pass the time), battling the soporific slowness of boredom and reawakening the senses, “of physically or bodily leaving boredom behind” (Conrad 1997: 474). And although security staff never articulated a link between their pastimes and the banishing of boredom this is how I read the particular tensions and temporalities of security as a kind of waiting, their intertwining concerns about boredom, passing the time and being alert. This is not the drifting of existential endurance but the focussed intentional actions of security staff fearful of what might happen were they to lose concentration, to lilt and lull with waiting, to stick in the tedious torpor of bored time. One passes the time not simply shifting in and out of Bergson’s absorption or Heidegger’s cloud but through pastimes that will restore and reinvigorate the senses.

Pastimes popped up in all kinds of places, in Ravit’s prolonged toilet breaks, in running errands to buy drinks, in Dudi and Adam’s *shishiot* and sometimes in playing around with radios. The radio, *machshir kesher*, walkie-talkie, or *meers*⁴ is a tool of the security trade, used for communication between staff, to locate others, to issue instructions or ask for help. At some security places the radios were set to a common frequency and used for serious work talk with fooling around strictly prohibited. Elsewhere all security staff may be provided with individual bandwidths or numbers. The handset doubles as an official line of communication and a less formal means of private tête-à-têtes. Security staff could periodically chat away to one another, pass jokes, and pass the time, providing they were not caught in the act. As we sat talking after a shift one day discussing our weekend plans and activities Smadar, a film student and part-time security guard, pulled out her camcorder and proudly showed me some of the footage she was collecting for her forthcoming film; a short piece on the real life of security staff at her place of work. Between introductions to the guards on screen – “This is Roi he’s so cute don’t you think?”,

⁴ *Meers*, actually MIRS = Motorola Integrated Radio System

“That’s Guy, he is such a hottie” – she provided running commentary and translation. The clip, she said, captures “our last joke, we can’t stop doing it now: it’s our thing. Strange the things we do when it’s quiet around here...” and snippets of conversation between the staff, starting with opening up in the early hours of the morning and ending with the quiet of the night time shift.

On the small screen a male guard smiles at the camera and begins to nod his head back and forth, putting his radio to his mouth and letting out loud pigeon-like coo-coos. “It is because we get so many of these birds around here” Smadar explained. Now he was high pitched, mimicking a buzzing mosquito. The frame switches to two other members of staff, a male and female, receiving the imitation coo-coos on their “meers” and laughing. “Aha” they say to one another and taking up the refrain begin to coo-coo in reply, with much nodding of heads and flapping of elbows until all double up with laughter. Smadar giggled and showed the clip a second time. “You see,” she said, “sometimes this is how we are passing the time. This is being a security guard sweetie”.

Diversions and distractions agitate, wake and hold attention. Watching women go by, playing the football pools, or joking about with walkie-talkies are not so much silly distractions but serious flights from boredom’s stupefying effects. Such pastimes and activities are a means by which one seeks to evade boredom, escape inertia and evoke the senses. Boredom is imbued with a call to action. For Heidegger of course there is a great deal of danger in such attempts to break with boredom. One must embrace and wait through boredom rather than flee from its clutches. To evade situative or shallow boredom through superficial busyness is to deny all possibility for profound boredom and eschew existential self-questioning: “suppressing boredom is anti-philosophical” (Thiele 1997: 510). Yet for security staff vigilance requires precisely the opposite, waiting is to remain alert and active, to guard against boredom’s anesthetising presence. To banish boredom and attend to the screening and surveilling of passers-by, to the checking bodies and bags, one must actively arouse attention. And so one could argue that spotting *shishiot* stimulates the senses, playing with radios reinvigorates the body and taking prolonged toilet trips breaks

the tedious time of security as a kind of waiting. Far from losing the will to act (Svendsen 2005: 19) or suffering from a “waning of liveliness” (Anderson 2004: 744), security waiting is characterised by energetic movements-from-boredom and activity. A distracted gaze may be an attentive gaze. One must stay alert after all.

Two ethnographic studies that do address boredom directly both discuss the phenomenon as it arises within postcolonial contexts; Jervis and colleagues (2003) in the Westernization of “Grass Creek” Native Americans and Yasmine Musharbash (2007) within locally distinct Warlpiri engagements with processes of modernity. For Jervis and colleagues, studying boredom on a Native American reservation called “Grass Creek”, boredom is located in the disjuncture between expectations and entitlements associated with dominant US cultural values with which younger people are increasingly identifying and the frustrating and alienating temporal realities of reservation life. Boredom signifies expectations not met and an American mainstream lying just out of reach (Jervis et al 2003). Scarce employment opportunities, a lack of recreational activities and public transportation difficulties are presented as the root of boredom arising from under-stimulation and a sense of “being deprived of the pleasure that is presumably available elsewhere” (Jervis et al 2003: 52-53). Attempts to escape boredom and pass time at “Grass Creek” are linked to “trouble”, a term covering all kinds of usually destructive activities that “nearly always involved alcohol or drugs. Other activities that fell under the rubric of trouble included sensation seeking behaviours, such as impromptu car racing, vandalism, and various illegal activities (Jervis et al 2003: 41).

For Yasmine Musharbash’s Warlpiri informants living on the Australian Aboriginal settlement of Yuendumu passing time, or “killing time” as she puts it, is a revolt not against boredom itself but against the circumstances and time regimes that make existential boredom possible (2007). Musharbash describes the temporal rhythms of Yuendumu life and their interruption by the school siren seven times a day, an event that signals the neo-colonial imposition of clock time over the indigenous streams and flows of Warlpiri time (Musharbash 2007). The result, she argues is an “idiosyncratic temporal jumble” that is neither Warlpiri nor mainstream. For a

people whose mode of living is through the absolute present there is the overwhelming sense that instead of providing new moments present time has become stagnant, nothing more than an endless, meaningless repetition of the same (Musharbash 2007: 313).

For the Warlpiri then, “killing time” is a response to and escape from temporal constraints, less an attempt to pass time than the rebellious “killing” of conflicting and constraining time regimes through actions that fracture and fragment settlement time. People go out “cruising” all day long, travelling from camp to camp, practising spatial strategies of escape through which they search for something to happen. Others watch TV or gamble for hours and days on end in vast swathes of unstructured time. Some use drugs or become violent, disrupting people in the middle of the night, interrupting meetings and rupturing settlement time (Musharbash 2007: 314).

Yet the pastimes security staff indulge in are neither troublesome reactions nor existential “killing time” revolts but are both situational and intentional activities aimed at breaking the boredom of waiting and bringing the body back to a state of alert anticipation. It is not existential waiting, it is instrumental waiting. “To while away the time”, writes Lars Svendsen, is to “attempt to drive away boredom by finding something or other – in principle it can be anything, that can hold one’s attention” (Svendsen 2005: 117). And it is to attention that we now turn.

Attending to attention is not the existential waiting with a sufferer which Simone Weil describes as “only watching, waiting, attention” (2001: 64). Waiting for Weil is not an activity as such but a substance – the substance of the self. To give one’s attention and to wait with the suffering or dying is not a matter of measurable clock time or effective action but one of proximity, sympathy and pure duration. And so waiting as Weil insists must be relearned as attention or re-attuned to the music of duration flowing through us, to return to Bergson’s waiting melody. Existential encounters and intuitions of duration may be actively practiced, valued and even revelatory. Waiting, as Weil articulates, is simply attention.

But the security guard bored through his or her waiting situation must remain in the distracted, shallow and uncomfortable realm of attention as activity, pacing, stretching and playing games. Waiting, as Crapanzano puts it, “is always waiting for something” (1985: 45 my emphasis), waiting for a toilet break, the end of the day, a potential suicide attack. It is an attentive anticipation of something or someone to come, maybe, perhaps, possibly. Despite the pragmatic and procedural “You cannot be afraid”, “I check bags”, “You must stay alert” responses of security staff, despite the fact that the threat may be uncertain or unlikely, its potential arrival is perceived as very real. It is a waiting filled with fear but what is at stake is not so much the threat, the potential suicide attack itself, but that one will not be alert, that one will be bored, that one will miss the suicide bomber’s all important arrival. Fear may actually be boring. Yet this security as a kind of waiting is not the suspended social paralysis Crapanzano depicts but a moment full of active potentiality; the moment that comes before something or someone that may or may not materialise. It is in these unpredictable and uncertain and tensions of security as a kind of waiting, that boredom is born. “It is marked by contingency”, writes Crapanzano, “– the perhaps – and all the anxiety that comes with the experience of contingency” (1985: 45). The banality and boredom of *bitachon* should be understood as neither the stuff of spectacular violence nor its absolute absence, but as arising through or holding the two in tension. Violence always beckons, always threatens to break through the surface of security.

Concluding remarks

Security as waiting in anticipation is not waiting as Bergson’s felicitous melody of duration, an existential attunement through which we may experience ourselves as embodied duration. Nor is such boredom Heidegger’s self-revelatory *parousia* or existential epiphany through which we may confront and perhaps comprehend our being-in-the-world. Instead it is an active, uncertain and boring anticipation of violence to come. Perhaps. Possibly. There is no emancipatory or existential moment

of realization or revelation, just the continuous moment of waiting, anticipating and staying alert.

One can play games and pass the time but one always comes back to waiting. After all the activity, boredom creeps in once again as one waits and anticipates; “Wow it is so boring. Have you ever seen a film again and again? That is what it is here, every day the same thing and the same people hanging around here” (Uri). “Sometimes this is how we are passing the time. This is being a security guard sweetie” (Smadar). “That passed the time” says Vladimir. “It would have passed in any case” says Estragon. “Yes but not so rapidly” Vladimir replies. They pause. Then, “What do we do now?” asks Estragon. “I don’t know” replies Vladimir. “Let’s go” Estragon suggests. But “We can’t” says Vladimir. “Why not?” Estragon asks. “We’re waiting for Godot” comes the predictable and inevitable response (Beckett 2006).

Despite the distractions security staff always return, like Vladimir and Estragon, to waiting, oscillating between boredom and alert anticipation, inertia and activity. Security provokes a fragmentary temporality, flowing and stagnating, rushing past and becoming blocked, a resonance that I hope this discussion has both explored and evoked. Security staff finish work, rush to the staffroom, change clothes and quickly leave to go home, or go to the gym, to play with the kids, collapse on the couch, eat, watch TV and get some sleep. But tomorrow is another shift and another day of alert anticipation, waiting, playing games, getting bored. “All evening we have struggled, unassisted. Now it’s over. It’s already tomorrow” says Vladimir (Beckett 2006: 69). But it is not over, tomorrow comes and Vladimir, Estragon and the security staff are still waiting, still anticipating, still becoming bored.

This part of the thesis has examined security practice as a kind of emotive and temporal experience of boredom, waiting and anticipation. Part two explores the doing or activity of these anticipatory practices or moments and asks, who or what are security surveilling or suspicious about? Who or what are they searching, anticipating, and waiting for?

Part two: Surveillance and Suspicion

Part one examined security practice as a particular kind of waiting and anticipation. As such I argued that security is not merely made up of abstract or existential concepts but emerges instead as active and felt experience. This second part of the thesis expands these arguments to explore the actual doing of security. It asks who, what, how, and why security staff are waiting and anticipating, surveiling and searching for?

“There will be a terror attack here” said Adam, a security guard at the station and one of my regular security informants, shielding the sun from his eyes and staring up at a balcony opposite. I had just started fieldwork with security staff. On the balcony, several concrete storeys above our heads stand two young men, rumoured to be from East Jerusalem and recent occupants of one shabby station-side property. East Jerusalem of course meant Palestinian Arabs and to the ever sceptical security guard Palestinian Arabs meant suspicion. Adam shook his head, “I am not sure when, one week, two weeks, one month...” and brought his eyes back to ground level guarding concerns. I promptly forgot about these new possible Palestinian neighbours. Exhausted, after several hours shadowing Adam I took myself on the 15 minute bus ride home for a post-shift snooze.

Adam, as it turned out, was rather more accurate than he realised and a suicide bomber attacked Tel Aviv that very afternoon. The explosion ripped apart a falafel and shawarma stand only a few streets away by the city’s old bus station area.

I awoke after my siesta, switched on my laptop in order to feed a growing news addiction and found the online press pages awash with eye-witness accounts; “the blast literally shook all the windows” (Ofer, a bank employee. ynetnews.com 19.01.2006), sound-bites collected from nearby stallholders, “it’s my fifth terror attack”, catching sight of the explosion whilst serving carrots to customers (Shalom, a stall holder, haaretz.com 20.01.2006), pictures of destruction and debris. Thirty two

were wounded with the only casualty being the 22 year old Nablus-born bomber himself, who blended into the dining crowd and, if current theory had it right, managed to detonate whilst in the men's toilet. Online newsreels ran jerky hand-held camera shots of paramedics and police cordons, flashing lights and emergency vehicles.

At this particular moment in 2006 and during the long and convoluted conflict between Israel and the Palestinians both peoples were experiencing a period of relative calm. For the past year Hamas and some other Palestinian political and resistance groups had been holding up a shaky ceasefire with the Israeli regime. The Shin Bet secret service was operating on peak form in the occupied territories and, together with the much lauded success of Israel's partially completed separation barrier (wall or fence) in keeping potential terrorists locked into the West Bank (along with everyone else) "terror" - for Israeli citizens at least - seemed to be at a long-term low. Islamic Jihad, in the meantime, remained in full resistance mode and had somehow managed to slip a suicide bomber through Israel's security net. And while I expected some people to respond to the failed attack with shock and horror most seemed rather more matter-of-fact about the day's explosive events.

"I thought I heard familiar things but I didn't realize where it was" was Tali's – my closest Tel Aviv friend's – first response over the telephone. I dialled her number immediately, eager to calm any worries about my whereabouts or well-being. But my concerns were quite unnecessary. Tali said she had picked up something about a "*pigua*" (terrorist attack) over her office radio airwaves but nothing more and had entirely forgotten about the locations of my daily fieldwork rounds. "Was it serious?" she asked before swiftly segueing into the far more serious matter of her brand new green jacket and the gig she would be wearing it to later that night.

Heading outside in search of more reactions and the neighbourhood low-down at Hadas's kiosk - a coffee, cake and local gossip stand in the small park-come-square outside the apartment - I found people equally matter-of-fact. "Oh I totally forgot you were over there today" said the owner Hadas rather absentmindedly, no doubt

with more important things on her mind than my relentless research agenda, bashing the coffee grounds out of the filter and filling it up for another *café hafuch*: Israel's answer to the frothy cappuccino. Conversation between Barak (a teacher), Michal (a legal clerk), the owner Hadas and myself quickly turned to which movies we wanted to see along with reviews of "Paradise Now", the latest and somewhat controversial and collaborative Palestinian/Israeli film to hit Israeli cinema screens. The plot, an almost ironic echo of the day's events, follows Said and Khaled, two childhood friends from Nablus as they prepare to carry out a suicide attack in Tel Aviv, and looked set to spark some major movie debate. "Israelis won't want to go after today" concluded Hadas, predicting inevitable box office doom.⁵

The only voice of concern came from Andy, a fellow anthropologist calling from northern Israel to check all was well.⁶ I began to feel as if the suicide bombing, albeit one without fatalities, was exceptional only to me the inexperienced outsider while for everyone else the occasional attack was now an almost expected and inevitable part of life in Israel/Palestine. Why waste time worrying about one which basically failed? Even the bomber himself had been unexceptional, melting into the mix of *Mizrachim*, Romanians, Russians and foreign workers filling their pita breads with salad and pickles at the south Tel Aviv shawarma stand. According to eyewitnesses the bomber wore a long black coat and posed as a pavement pedlar selling razor blades to passers by. Since dozens of different peoples populate that area of town and dozens of hawkers work the streets he didn't in look the slightest bit suspicious. "He looked exactly like us" the "*Rosh Ha'ir*", "The Mayor" shawarma restaurant owner explained to one reporter, "he was about 30, bald, with a French beard. He debated whether to enter, eventually did enter and blew himself up a few seconds later." (Amos Harel et. al. haaretz.com 20.01.2006)

The following day I took a bus straight to the station anxious to hear what Adam had to say about it all. To my surprise the station seemed just like normal, no army

⁵ Actually on the night I saw the film along with a film-buff friend "Paradise Now" played to a packed art house cinema audience.

⁶ Recall that in the introduction to the thesis it was Andy, another Edinburgh Anthropologist, who sent a worried late night text after the nightclub bombing.

presence, no police road blocks, nothing to suggest a nearby suicide attack. I found Adam in one of his usual spots, moaning to one of the resident taxi drivers about his boisterous taxi driving buddies. As far as the attack was concerned Adam was most bothered about misplaced police priorities, complaining that the force had been preoccupied with the arrest of a big time gang boss up north when they should be providing an essential presence right here in Tel Aviv. "It was obvious it was going to happen" was his final word on the suicide attack and with an air of resignation he got back to his taxi driver grumbles.

A few days later a local restaurant owner popped over to Adam and reported a suspicious man in the area. The owner had tried to speak with him but the man ran away and disappeared into the local crowds. Now the two of them checked around with other shop and stall owners nearby and many admitted to also spotting this strange or "suspicious" man around and about. Finally, in the little betting shop opposite the station they found the man captured on some grainy CCTV footage but quickly decided he was a foreign worker and not a potential terrorist after all. "Maybe Sri Lankan, very dark like an Arab" Adam explained. "After the attack last week everyone is looking" he said, summing up the general sense of heightened awareness and alert watchfulness following the botched falafel bombing.

A few months later (a couple of months after Israel elected a new government and a couple of weeks after Hamas' rise to power in the Palestinian Authority) Islamic Jihad struck the shawarma joint again. This time the blast ripped right through "*Rosh Ha'ir*" wounding 65 and killing nine others in the explosion including the security guard put in place following the previous January attack. The bomber, a 21 year old from a village near the West Bank city of Jenin reached Tel Aviv despite a total military clamp down around the territories put in place as Israelis celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover. "Recent declarations about Israel's victory over terror now sound like a bad joke" cried defence analyst Ze'ev Schiff from the pages of his *Ha'aretz* column (haaretz.com 18.04.2006). "Mission Impossible" ran another headline, whilst the army reported that 90 would-be suicide bombers had been apprehended in the West Bank since the beginning of the year (haaretz.com

18.04.2006). And, when the scope of the threat is so great, concluded Amos Harel, “there will always be a suicide bomber who gets away” (haaretz.com 18.04.2006). This is life, they seemed to be saying; we cannot stop every suicide attack. “It’s painful” the owner told me as we sat outside the rebuilt “*Rosh Ha’ir*” several months later, his two brothers manning the grills inside. “But life continues” he said, “*eyn ma la’asot*”, “there’s nothing we can do”.

This part of the thesis explores the questions and conundrums thrown up by these two explosive events. If the threat or the enemy comes in the form of a human body-bomb then how do people try to prevent it, recognise it or read bodies for signs of danger? This is the terrorist-detecting task of security staff and street level security checks and I was determined to find out how they do it. How do they watch, read and recognize? As such my focus is firmly on the fine grained practices and physicality of the security check itself. These reactions and responses of informants, friends and neighbours to the “*Rosh Ha’ir*” bombings run through the central themes of part two: surveillance, suspicion, bodies and race as I attempt to spool out and explore security practices. How do security staff keep a look-out for danger? Who or what are these dangerous or suspicious signs? How do they read or screen signs off specific bodies? And what do these practices actually do? The timing of my fieldwork at a point of relative calm in which terrorist attacks on Tel Aviv were few and far between, especially when compared with the fright and fear over frequent attacks between 2000 and 2003, the persistence of security practices despite the “terror” down-turn, some of the rather nonchalant or no-nonsense responses I encountered, ideas about bodies, danger and race, discussion about anybody and “Arab” bodies, demographics and difference, highlight the tensions which lie at the centre of this thesis between violence and conflict as the exception and the ways in which they are lived out in the ordinary and “everyday”.

In the following chapters I address this tension between the exception and the ordinary in order to draw out the ways in which the security check, its practices and perceptions are actually quite regular and routine, and explore the difficulties security staff face in distinguishing the safe from the dangerous, the ordinary citizens

from the (un)exceptional suspect. I seek to evoke the experiences security staff and citizens encounter at security checks by exploring what they do, how and with what effect. In the indeterminacies of the security check such extra-ordinary divisions dissolve as specific signs of suspicion collide with more abstract racialized notions of danger.

Security checks and the city

Drawing inspiration from Pradeep Jeganathan's (2004) description of Colombo and cartographies of security city space here I look to Tel Aviv and security checks as maps of anticipation and "normal" life.

In Tel Aviv, suicide bombs often have names; from the bus 5 bombing which killed 21 and injured 50 when a suicide bomber detonated aboard a packed bus along a busy Dizengoff Street in October 1994, or the 2001 Dolphinarium bombing which killed 21 and wounded more than 120 mostly teenage Israelis from the former CIS as they queued outside the beachfront club, the bomber mingling with the crowd before blowing up, to the Mikes Place attack which killed three and injured over 50 at the popular promenade pub in 2003. A suicide bombing is named and associated not after the terrorist/martyr (the appellation depends on how one reads the conflict), nor the Israeli citizens who are always the primary target, but after the point or place of explosion: a bus, a nightclub, a bar, a café, a shopping mall or market. Places and spaces are enfolded within the explosive event, recollections of a devastating moment and anticipations of future violence to come.

Since any spaces in which large numbers of people congregate or through which many people pass are presumed possible targets, the entire city, as lived by Tel Avivians, is marked by "maps of anticipation" (Jeganathan 2004: 68). Such sites include schools, cinemas and shopping malls, restaurants and cafés, targets which traverse the town such as buses and service taxis, and more fleeting, ephemeral gatherings which take the form of political rallies, pop concerts and love parades. In

this sense it is the continuous movement of people around the city, their coming and going and congregating at particular points that create places and targets and - since a suicide bomber is also a person - potential attackers. There is a certain corporeality to these cartographies of violent possibility. This raises the question of how one attempts to control, manage and protect targets that alter and shift with the movement of citizens coming together and dispersing, pausing and passing by, across the landscape of the city?

Such mappings are marked by security checks and security guards, sites which map, in turn, cartographies of (in)security and potential violence; fearful anticipations of frightening possibility. Some, like the guarded entrances to a shopping mall or office block are static, others, like the security guard who hops on and off public buses, swiftly scanning people and packages by eye before hopping off again, move across the cityscape. The crowds flocking to a rock concert, food fair or national remembrance service present more fleeting, flickering points of violent potentiality. Capturing the shifting webs of targets and their marking out by military checkpoints Pradeep Jeganathan paints a picture of Colombo as a territory mapped and remapped by changing perceptions of vulnerability and violence (Jeganathan 2004). His deft description of shifting perceptions, targets and checkpoints draws our attention to the anticipatory spaces and practices that pre-figure the possibility of violence emerging into the lived world, a discussion I take up and expand below.

Tel Aviv too is a city of security gates and guards. Israel itself is a landscape of checkpoints and security checks, from the military checkpoints within the occupied West Bank, at the entrances and exits to Gaza, or along the so-called “separation fence” that borders the West Bank with the rest of Israel, to the body-guarding of prominent politicians, the supermarket security gates staffed by low-paid security staff, or the more spontaneous checks performed by civil guards patrolling Tel Aviv’s night-time streets. In its most commonplace Tel Aviv incarnation a security check stands at the entrance to a particular space or place, usually nothing more than a gap in a hip-height cordon or barrier, manned by one or two private security guards and selectors, who stop the flow of pedestrians and/or vehicles in order to check

bodies and baggage for weapons and bombs. Such security checks may involve a team of staff or simply a single security guard stood at the door to a café with a *magnum* wand in hand. Yet such checks aimed at making people and space safe and secure may create clusters of individuals standing in line to be checked, paradoxically producing potential targets through the very presence and practice of security.

Yet, although people who are regularly singled out as suspicious or a person who is carrying or has knowledge of a bomb are doubtless aware of gates and checks and guards, the city does not feel stifled by or saturated with security staff. Passing through checks has become part of everyday practice, of Tel Avivians living the city, traversing its streets and entering its public and private spaces. There are no checkpoints marking the city limits, no high fences or frontiers dividing sections of the city or cutting across its streets. Guards do not stand outside every door, or patrol every pavement. Tel Aviv is no “fortress city” as Mike Davis describes Los Angeles (Davis 1990, 1992), inscribed with landscapes of fear and exclusion. Tel Aviv is no “divided city” (Low 1997, 1999) of “hyperghettos” (Wacquant 1994) fences and frontiers running along racial, economic and social fault lines. There are certainly poor areas and affluent areas, areas dominated by *Ashkenazim* or *Mizrachim*, gleaming northern suburbs filled with brand new apartment blocks and more dilapidated and deprived southern neighbourhoods for instance but the city is not dissected by private residential compounds, “gated communities” like New York City or San Antonio (Low 1997, 1999, 2001) or Sao-Paulo-style “fortified enclaves” (Caldeira 1999, 2001). Places where discourses of crime and violence and fear are built into the city, where the wealthy retreat behind secure barriers, residential compounds, guarded shopping malls and gated office complexes “scurrying from secured place to privatised space” (Low 1997: 68). Instead an exemplary kind of strange normalisation reigns supreme through which such commonplace security practices enable Tel Avivians to live out their desire for “normal” life in the face of ongoing conflict and tactics of terror whose very violent aim is to interrupt and suspend normal or ordinary life by insinuating fright and fear into perceptions of public city space.

As discussed in the introduction the city's streets and the ways in which Tel Avivians live the city are far from the kind of dystopic divisive spatial ordering that dominates many anthropological approaches to urban space, conflict and violence. Running counter to such structurings that are closed off, cloistered, secured and shut away, security checks are aimed at maintaining movement and flows of citizens, at creating safe and domesticated rather than divided city space. Such checks certainly communicate a kind of boundary, a boundary that traverses territory and flows through the space of Tel Aviv. But these boundaries are also mundane, pragmatic, spatial and material practices through which people may produce, negotiate and maintain a sense of the ordinary despite the uncertainty of violence as they move within and through their built and social world.

There is, as I discuss in following chapters, a profound kind of normalisation at work whereby security checks have become an expected, ordinary and automatic part of daily living for many Jewish-Israeli citizens. Security staff enable cafes to remain open, lively and relaxed, bars brimming with customers enjoying a night out, markets bustling with weekly business. *Bitachon* becomes, as numerous friends and informants told me, just "normal life". Yet all this is a pretence to normality, for to pass through a security check is to recall the possibility of violence (Jeganathan 2004). Violence always threatens, always the possibility, always the potentiality, to break through the surface of security.

This part of the thesis draws on the time I spent with Adam and other security staff at the station, shadowing their activities and sharing in their security shifts along with incidents and anecdotes from security staff at a variety of other field sites; a train station, a bar, a café and a shopping mall. I also base my analysis on information gleaned and knowledge gained volunteering as an honorary civil guard, usually at the entrance to the market or patrolling the streets in an old police van along with other members of my local community civil guard station. In addition I captured all kinds of perceptions and perspectives from more fleeting conversations with people on the street, some specifically recorded and others simply picked up in passing. In this sense whilst example and analysis draws on ethnography at a particular place, I hope

it provides a more general picture of surveillance and suspicion within security practise.

Step by step chapters two to four explore how security staff check citizens and how people react to those checks. A pedestrian stops at a security check outside a cinema to have her bag and her body searched. What might this mean in a country that is in the midst of a continuing and protracted conflict? Where Palestinian terrorists or martyrs use techniques of terror such as suicide bombings against Israeli populations, where Israeli military forces, in turn, commit acts of terror and use techniques of counter-terrorism against Palestinian populations in the occupied territories, and where the borders of the state are contested and unstable, the question who is safe, who belongs and who is dangerous, is shot through with risk, uncertainty and the unknown.

What is happening here? Rather than begin with an answer, I want to allow the ethnography to take precedence, following the security guards and civil guards - as I did in the field - as they zigzag between specific signs of suspicion and more abstract notions of danger, as they slip and slide from “anybody” might be suspicious, to all “Arab” bodies are suspicious, to a suspect or somebody suspicious. It is an empirical foregrounding that slips back and forth between ethnography, analysis and broader debate as I attempt to present the perspectives and practices of security checks, guards and citizens in all their ambiguity and uncertainty.

First, chapters two and three explore security as surveillance, tracing the strategies and suspicions employed by security staff as they scan the social scene for potential persons without documents and possibly dangerous suspects. Chapter four addresses security as social interaction and inclusion within a certain kind of suspicious citizenship. Finally I ask what my materials may have to say about security in Israel, about who belongs, who is suspicious, and who is a citizen. Why do security checks persist and suspicion prevail? Or, to put it differently, such security checks may tell us something about the kind of state Israel is.

Chapter two: Documents and Expertise

“The spectre of the terrorist”, writes Joanna Bourke in her cultural history of (Anglo-American) fear, “has taken on a god-like power, equivalent to the plague of earlier times or the Satan of religion” (2005: x). She links this twenty-first century reign of “terror” fear with the rapid rise of surveillance systems and political debate about the need for ‘pre-emptive strikes’. Fears over terrorism - over who is safe and who is unsafe - have it seems, taken on a whole new political and public prominence. This general picture of post 9/11 alarm provides a useful starting point from which to situate the small-scale security checks that form the focus of following discussion. This chapter places street-level security checks in Tel Aviv within wider debates surrounding surveillance, legibility, and risk, questions security as preventative performance, explores how security staff read danger off documents, detect persons without papers, and the ways in which this may be experienced as pleasurable expertise.

Surveillance studies tend to echo Bourke’s post 9/11 analysis, painting a picture of ever-spreading surveillance driven by a post-modern preoccupation with national security, risk management and the taming of chance (see for example Beck 1992, Feeley and Simon 1992, 1994, Garland 2001, Giddens 1990, Lupton 1999, Lyon 2001, 2006, Raab 2005). Kirstie Ball and Frank Webster (2003) point to the acceleration and intensification of surveillance trends in the light of 9/11, an expansion of those deemed worthy of scrutiny, and an integration of crime, terrorism and warfare strategies. And so whilst noting that surveillance practices have been developing for decades, David Lyon draws our attention to a fresh sense of surveillance urgency, “This relates in part to the post-9/11 contexts of ‘crisis’ but more generally to a world in which risk and risk management have risen up the ranks of priority” (Lyon 2007: 45). Although the primary threat in the global “war on terror” is generally perceived as stemming from non-European forms of radical or fundamentalist Islam it is also thought to be covert and clandestine. Traditional crime prevention founded on detection and prosecution is not applicable to a situation where the threat is perceived as concrete and yet unknown. As Julia Eckert (2008)

and Tobias Kelly (2008) argue, the result is preventable forms of protection and security based around risk.

The word surveillance, rooted in the French *surveiller*, means literally to “watch over”, and whilst watching over others may mean checking citizens are safe for example, surveillance also implies watching those who seem in some way dangerous or suspect. Surveillance is also about the spreading governance of suspicion, uncertainty, fear and unease.

Of course the aim of a risk-oriented approach to the world, or risk management, means to calculate and control risk, be it the probability of a terror attack, crime or a Wall Street crash. Risk centred security seeks to predict and prevent dangerous events before they happen rather than merely focus on present predicaments (Beck 1992: 34, Feeley and Simon 1994, Lupton 1999, Lyon 2007). It is front-loaded and forward looking, no longer concerned with older paternal or panoptic managerial and protective methods such as catching criminals and disciplining offenders, but to “situate subjects according to the risk they pose” (Simon 1988: 772). Such new “actuarial” or pre-emptive risk strategies calculate costs, risks and benefits, likelihoods and probabilities based on statistical data gleaned from people’s activities and spending preferences, from surveys, polls and questions, turning individual actors into locations on a table of variable distribution (Simon 1988). The result is a two-pronged surveillance process characterised by; A) a drive towards “legibility”, to render populations visible and known (Scott 1998, also Caplan and Torpey 2001, Trouillot 2001), and B) a desire to calculate, classify and compute, sorting citizens into specific groups or predictive categories all with the aid of computerised and information technologies (Feeley and Simon 1994, Lyon 2003). The terrorist, for instance, will be unmasked by surveillance techniques, his or her behaviour categorised, predicted, pre-empted and prevented.

Haggerty and Ericson (2000) famously take up Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the *rhizome* – a horizontal, multi-directional and root-like spreading – to describe the proliferation of these surveillance technologies as a “surveillant assemblage”,

interconnecting and insinuating its way into all walks of life. Surveillance information collected for one purpose may be shared and used for another, the data gathered by telephone companies for example may be put to police or security purposes. Swiping cards, remembering passwords and tapping in PINs is all part and parcel of daily life (Lyon 2007). Security-surveillance now monitors our every movement it seems, from security threats to consumer purchases and even health complaints (Lyon 2007). ID cards carry our personal details, websites collate our consumer profiles and CCTV cameras watch us from above. We have entered the era of the “surveillance society” argues David Lyon (2001), describing the widespread, systematic and routine monitoring of personal data. Whereas Charles Raab considers the rising emphasis placed on national security in all this surveillance activity and suggests we have arrived in the age of the “safety state” (Raab 2005). Others point to the totalitarian tendencies of such urgent and unbridled surveillance developments, warning against the steady erosion of civil liberties (see for example Bigo 2006, Los 2006).

Yet this popular motif of post 9/11 panic, all-seeing and all-knowing surveillance systems seems far too dystopic and deterministic an image. Are we all subjects of omniscient and omnipotent surveillance systems? Such pictures of ubiquitous surveillance – although insightful – situate analysis within a particular political-economic moment and a particular Euro-American place, neglecting *other* local processes, surveillance sites or space. What about security staff surveilling for suspects at security gates and checks on the streets of Tel Aviv? These are everyday surveillance processes moving focus from the many to the few, from general surveillance to a specific suspect that are not addressed by technological “assemblages” or actuarial theory. As we will see, when it comes to actual surveillance practice it is actually rather difficult to make people visible or sort them into simple categories. Surveillance may not succeed in producing greater knowledge, insight or clarity. Processes of legibility may in reality produce their own forms of illegibility, so that seeing everyone may mean you miss the dangerous someone altogether. The tragedy of security-surveillance, I want to suggest is not

that they – the state, the surveiller, the security guard – know too much, but that perhaps they don't know enough.

The pitfalls of performance

So off I set to explore security-surveillance on the streets of Tel Aviv and find some answers to all the questions raised by the “*Rosh Ha'ir*” attacks. I began to spend hours standing with security guards and selectors on shift and volunteered with a local branch of the somewhat dated yet still vigorous Israeli civil guard (*mishmar ezrachi*). While security staff are paid professionals civil guards are volunteer citizens, the former often motivated by pecuniary needs and occupational goals, the latter by a sense of social commitment or crime-fighting aspirations. The first is formal and restricted to specific security gates or places, the second more casual and extra-curricular, often spreading out across and through city streets and public space. At different times and in different places a security guard may be keeping a watchful eye for drunks and delinquents, and a civil guard looking out for petty thieves, but all the people I spent time with mostly watched for potential terrorists.

Nevertheless, these early immersions into various pockets of security practice around the city were neither smooth nor simple, people's first reactions to my inquisitive questions and queries hovering somewhere between contradictory and confused. Contradictions about the very purpose and practice of security checks and confusion as to why on earth one would want to research such an unremarkable part of life. There seemed little agreement amongst neighbours, my new found informants or the woman and man on the street about why security checks exist, whether they were necessary, or even if it is all just a case of preventative performance; a show to appease the anxious masses. Here I outline some of these responses along with my own initial attempts to comprehend the conundrums and clashing opinions from which I eventually arrived at my own ethnographic approach.

For starters many people looked askance at my interest in something so apparently self-evident. “*Eyn ma la'asot*”, “There's nothing we can do” cried a man at the bus

stop, “In our situation, in our lives it’s a must” said a woman from her market stall, “That is how life is here and you have to do it. You cannot have someone coming in here with a bomb strapped to him” said another sitting in the shopping mall. If there is a threat from suicide bombers then one needs security staff to stop them from entering crowded space. It was that simple. Their snappy responses came with an air of impatient indignation; it was so patently obvious why should one need to ask? they seemed to be saying. “That is all” they said; end of story. Such rapid and almost resigned responses to expected and ordinary security checks - the naturalization or normalisation of security practices - requires reacting to; we must investigate and interrogate the apparently taken-for-granted.

Then there was the issue of intimacy and privacy as security guards check over bodies and inside bags; the “on the one hand it harms our privacy, but on the other hand if they don’t do it, it might lead to people’s death – God forbid” reaction. This particular one came from a woman working on her laptop in a central café. Security checks involve no physical contact, no pat-downs or frisking, relying on sense, sight and metal detectors alone. Yet in the checking of bodies and bags they are also up close and personal; intimate if you will. “We just thought this action says so much, you can see there is the personal, the private, the tension between them in this moment” said Yossi talking about his photograph (figure 4, below) as I sat down with him and his creative partner Shai, smoking cigarettes and drinking tea on the dilapidated couch at their studio-come-photography collective in a run-down downtown business block. Their picture, a stylized image of an everyday security check, had been fly-posted across the centre of town. Just one of a series of shots they had taken showing everyday actions, this one sitting in their portfolio beside a close-up of bread being sliced.



Figure 4: "Check me out" Zilum Ba'am 2006

The photograph shows a male security guard, clearly marked out by his cap labelled "*bitachon*", his security company shirt and a gun stuck in his belt, checking over a man in sweatpants and sandals. On the face of it a very ordinary occurrence, and yet their encounter is almost an embrace. There is an intimacy in their interaction; the

citizen-subject stood, submissive, arms slightly out to the side, head bent towards the ground. The security guard leans forwards and down, almost touching the other's shoulder, scanning a leg with the familiar *magnometer*. Their faces are turned away from one another, and of course they do not touch, yet the image implies closeness and an intimate knowledge revealed in posture and pose – through the body – and made explicit in the cheeky title – “check me out”. Is it inviting, confrontational, erotic, or extrovert? That much is left to the viewer to decide. It is not the security itself so much as an intimate aesthetic which strikes us; no background, no context, just a white backdrop with all attention on the action itself. “I don’t know what you will find to write about” said Yossi pointing to his picture and taking a sip of tea, “it’s all here in the image”.

Finally there were the “I don’t know it really does anything” (a security guard at the station) “realists”. For these people such security is all a show. “So you’re aware of the ritual?” the two photographers had said, bringing up the idea of preventative performance as we discussed my research. “If you see a security guard you feel safer but it is all bullshit. If someone comes and they want to blow themselves up there is nothing a security guard can do” said Nadav, a twenty-something neighbour and Jazz musician. “What do they do? They do nothing” barked an office worker in an uptown bar. Be it the “*bitachon*” (security) emblazoned shirt worn by security guards or the florescent “police” bib sported by civil guard volunteers being seen was all that mattered. “It’s all about impression” I was told, time and time again by Marco, an Italian by birth and the most committed volunteer at our civil guard base, as we embarked on yet another day of market guarding duty. We would deter potential terrorists by our very presence. “It’s just like theatre” suggested Ya’el, another volunteer regular and an export inspector by day, reflecting on her work as we prepared to patrol a public demonstration outside the municipality HQ. Everyone would play their part and follow the script - the soldiers, the security guards, and the civil guards - just like actors on a security stage. *Bitachon* for these people was all about being seen, or to put it differently, security was all a performance; a security-aesthetic aimed at assuaging public anxiety and keeping terrorists away.

I arrived at Rabin square one evening for some extra voluntary duty and stood beside Yaron; a round-bellied, bespectacled septuagenarian, and veteran civil guard. We stood in front of a line of blue city council barriers, with the odd policeman and a bunch of private security guards behind us. Behind them was an outdoor spinning event and the object of our security endeavours, all healthy looking cyclists, colourful spandex and motivational banners – part of a month-long municipality health kick. I look around and ask Yaron what it is we are actually supposed to do. “You do not have to know what to do, you just stand” he replies, getting right to the visual nub of the matter as I slip on a bright yellow bib and he launches into another round of his *Palmach* tales - a favourite topic of conversation - about fighting the Egyptians and conquering the desert in ‘48, stories filled with danger and pioneer derring-do.⁷ He fought for freedom from British imperialism once upon a time and then found himself fighting neighbouring nations for the next forty years, still compelled today by a sense of danger that never went away. “I didn’t think that at my age I would still be doing this” he said, “standing here against all those terrorists”.

Personally, I dreaded being caught by some friend or acquaintance as I stood in my glowing yellow bib, a shining beacon of all the popular perceptions of civil guards as an anachronistic throw-back to the seventies when the Arab nations threatened and security was all the rage. Then it was a case of providing essential support to protect one’s own community. Now it seemed sometimes we just had to stand and be seen.

Avram Bornstein also argues that Israeli military checkpoints along the Green Line are nothing more than a show, a “performance of security” (2002: 215) to assuage the fears of an anxious Israeli public. According to Bornstein checkpoints were put in place in order to placate fears about suicide bombers, assure the public of their own safety and appease calls for security to be stepped up. Checkpoints, he suggests, are simply “symbolic action” (Bornstein 2002), there to show Israelis that something is being done; a political ruse, a public performance. Checkpoints communicate or

⁷ The *Palmach* “strike force” formed the regular fighting units of the Jewish army, the Haganah, in pre-state Palestine. They fought with the Allies during the Second World War and played a major role in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

demonstrate security but are devoid of actual content. That is why, he argues, major checkpoints close to Jewish Israeli communities or those used by Israelis themselves (mostly settlers and businesspeople) are rigorously imposed, while those along minor roads and back routes – often only a couple of kilometres away – seem rather more relaxed and sporadic at best. No Israelis were here to see Palestinians sneaking around or slipping through (Bornstein 2002: 214, see also Kelly 2003). Like Marco's "It's all about impression" security Bornstein-style is all in the presentation.

However, claims that security checks are purely performance are actually rather problematic. The assumption that checkpoints and security checks are simply a show of security presumes that there is no substance to the activity, nothing behind the performance but empty social or in this case security construction. Are Israelis willing participants in a performance just for show? Is security simply a script one follows to show "security" and feel safe and secure? Is security all just structure without substance? In fact, Israelis are hardly inured to problems with terrorist prevention - "I don't know it really does anything" - and yet the security check persists. Indeed, checks continue despite the thoughts of those who see them as no more than a superfluous cover-up. In presuming all is make-believe, or simply a sort of "communicative behaviour" (Schechner 1973:3), Bornstein misses the actual activity of security, the practical doing of *bitachon*. Performance tells us nothing of security practice, of what people do and how they do it. It asks nothing of practical effects, submerging all activity under a veneer of vacuous presentation. *Bitachon* is physical activity after all, and it is actual bodies – bodies which might be bombers - bodily movements and behaviour it needs to surveil. In this way one could argue that even if security is constructed as an effect of a particular performance then it is an embodied and sensual effect – and so deserves further empirical exploration. What does security actually do and how? And if it is not "security" as Bornstein argues, then what is it? How does it feel and with what effects?

I suggest that what is needed is precisely the opposite approach; one which looks beyond performance towards security as actual practice, explores and interrogates the different responses I have outlined here, and asks what it is really all about. Moving

beyond performance to explore something of the materiality and emotional life of security avoids the constructivists' dilemma - that security is all in the act, inviting the conclusion that it is all empty performance - and allows us to ask what security checks and security guards actually do. Indeed, one of the two photographer's rather arrogant remarks was to ask how I would write about security checks "because we don't think we just do" he said, "There is no meaning there, it is automatic activity", suggesting security checks are no less a performance than his carefully composed pastiche. But is this not what anthropology is all about? Looking beyond what people say they do to explore what they do do? Seeking to explicate and explore the meaning behind the rhetoric, or beneath the surface of social action? An endeavour Clifford Geertz famously called an "interpretive" science "in search of meaning" (1973: 5). Meaning is not given; it occurs in practice (Hastrup 1995: 163).

If security is not simply there to assuage public anxieties then what does it do? Security checks and their practitioners need to be examined empirically. Only in doing so can we begin to understand why they remain in place, their experiences and their effects. In following sections I aim to open up this activity of *bitachon*, vicariously sharing the vision of security staff who snoop, and poke and pry. Exploring somewhere between "It is a must", intimate "check me out" tensions and "They do nothing", to tease out the practical and physical life of street level security. For there is another kind of intimacy at work here, that of security guards surveilling the sociospace, checking bodies, raising questions and asking for ID. Not to mention the citizens standing in line, scoping out the social scene themselves and presenting their bodies for inspection.

Sniffing out *SHaBa"CHim*

Arriving at the station I was often greeted with a grin and a "How many *SHaBa"CHim* do you think I will catch today?" from Dudi and Adam, my chief security chums and self-proclaimed doyens of *SHaBa"CH* detection, accompanied by an eager "Let's look for *SHaBa"CHim*" or an exasperated "Where are all the

SHaBa”*CHim*!” as they geared up for the guarding day. Literally meaning “present un-legally”, *SHaBa*”*CH* (*sho’he bilti chuki*)⁸ refers to any individual in Israel illegally; any person without the requisite papers. And although technically the acronym refers to anyone, from over-staying holiday-makers to visa-less Thai labourers, the guards barely bat an eyelid at tourists and travellers, or the throngs of foreign workers passing through their security gates (many of whom live in surrounding streets), seemingly saving their *SHaBa*”*CH* surveillance for particular persons without a permit. Adam the security guard, stands scanning passers-by from behind his shades, leaping into action at the slightest sign of a shifty *SHaBa*”*CH*. He is off like a shot, jogging along, belly jiggling, keys jangling, hailing his target with a wave of the hand and “hello”. Then come the questions: “Where are you going?”, “Where are you from?” and “Identity card?” before he reads the ID and makes up his mind. Identifying between illegal *SHaBa*”*CHim* and legitimate citizens and dealing with the paraphernalia of papers, entry documents and ID cards forms a large part of the day for this particular team of security staff. Yet spotting a *SHaBa*”*CH* – determining who is a legal citizen and who is not – from amongst this array of papers and people turns out to be a doubtful and difficult task.

Indeed, Israel/Palestine presents a panoply of passports and permits, with all citizens and non-citizens carrying coloured identity cards with them wherever they go. It is these ID cards; dark blue for Jewish-Israelis and Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel, and for non-citizens the blue covered cards carried by Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, orange Israeli issued West Bank Palestinian cards, or green covered Palestinian Authority cards held by Palestinians living in the occupied territories (UNOCHA 2003), that Adam is on the look-out for as he strides after a suspected *SHaBa*”*CH* waving his hands and demanding ID. However, as we will see, populations may not be so easily sorted into simple colour-coded sets.

Of course it is impossible to detect a person without papers simply by sight, my flatmate Avi declared during my early guarding days, scoffing at my stories of *SHaBa*”*CH* spotting “skills” as nothing but nonsense. On the contrary, he calculated,

⁸ *SHaBa*”*CH* singular, *SHaBa*”*CHim* plural.

only once one has the papers (or lack thereof) in hand, can identity, legality or legitimacy be known. And Avi is not alone in his documentary analysis. Many scholars would agree that when it comes to documents proof of identification and citizenship lies in the paper. In his history of the passport for example, John Torpey describes how papers and permits, from the first written records to the latest ID cards, were developed by state authorities in order to register just who a person is and where they may and may not go (Caplan and Torpey 2001: 2). According to Torpey there has been a move from individual identification rooted in physical appearance and social relationships to determination through documents (Torpey 2000). The modern extension of civil and political rights of citizens required careful scrutiny, the registration and bureaucratic documentation of personal details in order to monitor and determine citizenship entitlements (Torpey 2000, Lyon 2001). Documents he suggests, have long been a primary method of identification and principle proof of citizenship providing what he terms a monopoly on the “means of movement” regulating who may and may not enter a given town or territory (Torpey 2000).

The parallel to Torpey’s socio-spatial analysis, and which David Lyon picks up in his discussion of surveillance studies, is with other famous state-related monopolies, such as that over the means of production (Marx) or violence (Weber) (Lyon 2007). Lyon’s suggestion here - and one which fits snugly into this exploration of *SHaBa*’s *CH* seeking and security work - is that surveillance, or a monopoly surrounding the “means of identification” has emerged as a powerful contemporary monopoly contender. In contexts of concern about unknown terrorist threats believed to lie outside one’s own borders, control over movement becomes the prerogative of preventative security and identity documents are used to distinguish between friends and enemies. This involves not only the regulation of movement as Torpey suggests, but also the use of documents to make a population visible and conjure clarity from a sea of opaque citizens; to decide who is who they say they are, who belongs and who does not. In a world with constantly moving populations and a world increasingly fearful of unknown terrorists and uncertain terror risks, such documentary surveillance speaks of a desire to fix people in place, to render citizen-subjects

“legible” (Scott 1998:65) and predict the possible threat they pose (see Kelly 2008). The preventative predilections of security and risk require readable, identifiable persons; visibility is vital. This is precisely what documents are designed to do, to make the population legible, decipherable and known.

There is a will to legibility here, to use Scott’s metaphor, inherent in the checking of passports and permits around the globe, from Ben Gurion (Israel’s international airport) to JFK, Marseilles to the U.S. – Mexico border, as immigration and security staff try to tell legitimate citizens from illegitimate others, to distinguish friend from foe (Caplan and Torpey 2001, Kelly 2008, Lyon 2007, Torpey 2000, Trouillot 2001). Attempts to produce legible citizen-subjects through passports and papers are familiar to us in these broader contexts of border controls at the boundaries of a state, at airports and border crossings. And it is common for the airport with all its security inspections and passenger checks to appear as the place par excellence for security surveillance and sorting (Lyon 2007). Yet such checking is not confined to the territorial margins. As the street-level security checks show, border-making processes and surveillance sites may run right through the body of the state.

What becomes interesting as ethnographic exploration continues is not only how the state attempts to make the population visible to itself but also how these practices become embedded in forms of activity through which ideas of citizens and subjects are produced by those who carry out and consent to such practices. Citizens are not self-evident, they are made in and through everyday interactions. So, the document discloses the person according to this legible logic and yet Adam already held his suspicions in advance, running after someone on a hunch and a whim - detecting something untoward in their body or behaviour way before he read their documents and requested their ID. My flatmate was flummoxed because such skilful *SHaBa*”*CH* sensing – pin-pointing persons without a permit – is precisely what several guards claimed to do, deferring documentary evidence in favour of more subtle and supposedly stable bodily signs and significations. But how does Adam tell who is who without documentation? Who or what does he watch for?

Spending time with the *SHaBa"CH* detectives meant I often found myself inadvertently roped in and recruited to the task with a "Look. Watch, watch! You look over here, I'll look over there", from Dudi, sent with a prod and a point to surveil the masses despite my professed ignorance in the business of spotting a *SHaBa"CH*. And so I stand on the sidewalk as instructed, searching for supposed signs yet not knowing what on earth they are, scanning bodies amidst all the hustle and bustle of street and station life. A group of young soldiers gather to one side, greeting one another with affectionate backslaps and manly hugs, boots shiny and kit bags heaped in a pile. Taxi drivers lean on cab bonnets shouting and touting for business. People walk briskly, scamper, scurry and rush on by in the blink of an eye. One man sets out his artificial flowers for sale, a woman sweeps the pavement outside her corner store, another hangs up her twenty *shekel* tee shirts, shawarma sizzles on the kebab stall – and so, it feels, does my brain. How can you tell who is without ID? What am I looking for anyway? Who is this shadowy *SHaBa"CH* figure? The down-and-outs doing their daily recycling rounds, checking the rubbish bins for plastic bottles and empty cans of pop? The school kids carrying backpacks and books? The man scanning the pages of the daily news?

Adam looks for what he calls an "Arab face" or apparently "Arab body language", tracking bodily markers and movement, while Dudi, born to a Bedouin mother and Jewish Israeli father, boasts that he can simply sniff out a suspected *SHaBa"CH*. "I just know one when I see one" he tells me time and time again as I try in vain to comprehend the "who's" and "how's" of catching conduct, each time adding an ostentatious sniff of the air and a finger flourish under his nose, evidently proud of his *SHaBa"CH* "smelling" prowess.

A small group of men in suits rush by. A peroxide pair of women – mother and daughter perhaps – scurry to a gate in skimpy tops, their faces animated, speaking high-speed Russian and holding out their bags for inspection. An elderly man stoops and shuffles along, wrinkled hand on walking stick, forging his way amid the flow with a rappety-tap-tap. Young *Haredim* (Orthodox Jews) walk by wearing big black suits and wide-brimmed hats, smiling, checking cell phones, crossing the road.

Lights change: traffic halts. An Ethiopian lady comforts her crying baby and the air fills with sound. Clip-clopping high heels, flip-flop scuffles and car horn hoots. Radios, music, a cell phone ring. Lights change: traffic roars.

Pedestrians meander and others move quickly, bump and shove and stand still in security queues. A group of three guys in tight blue jeans and even tighter tee shirts, all tan and hair gel. A frowning man with a duffle bag, a mangy dog, a toddler in a pram. Someone pushes past in a blur of long skirts and bangles, someone else clips my arm with a shopping cart, turns her head and scuttles on. How about that man dishing out falafel over the road? The hairy, dark one in a sweaty yellow shirt? Is he a *SHaBa*”*CH*? Is he Israeli? Is he Arab? Is he both? Is he Palestinian or *Mizrachi*? Iraqi? Yemeni? Moroccan perhaps? I don’t know. I can’t tell, I don’t have a clue, and am beyond caring as Dudi calls my name and stands, his arm on one of the hair gel guys who walked by a second before. “See, a *SHaBa*”*CH*!” he says, smiling.

Clearly there was more to this *SHaBa*”*CH* catching caper than a piece of paper or permit. Both Adam and Dudi’s methods of spotting a *SHaBa*”*CH* seemed rather different than simply reading off documents, searching for something other or something beyond written identification. Needless to say I was never very adept at spotting a *SHaBa*”*CH* nor attuned to the bodily signs and significations that seemed second nature to my security guard informants. But what were they looking for and how did they tell? Something to do with Arabs, something sniff-able, something simply known? Why are they not just looking at documents as Torpey suggests? Perhaps because papers may make people more, not less unknown and uncertain. Perhaps because they cannot tell Dudi and Adam what they need to know.

Documents, as it turns out, are far from reliable and may do more to disguise and deceive than reveal or make visible. Papers put in place in order to fix populations paradoxically produce possibilities for illegibility, for fakery and fraud (Lyon 2007). According to Susan Coutin this capacity for the counterfeit means that persons may hide behind papers and identity documents may take on a “life of their own”, open to

all manner of manipulations as people try to traverse checkpoints, boundaries and border controls (Coutin 2000: 54, Ferme 2004, Poole 2004). Mariane Ferme (2004) describes how an informant's original Sierra Leonean identity card included a false identity and date of birth. Having left Sierra Leone for Cairo years before the civil war, he managed, like many others, to re-fashion documentary evidence and his own sense of belonging to Sierra Leone in order to exploit the war-time prospects for international migration. To claim deterritorialized citizenship in the US as a Sierra Leonean "war refugee" Ferme's informant had to fiddle his already falsified documents – with a little help from an NGO – and adopt these papers as the basis upon which a new identity could be forged (Ferme 2004). Kelly (2008) notes the continuous flow of West Bank Palestinians, many of whom hold foreign passports, through Ben-Gurion airport controls, despite the formal travel restrictions and prevention of Palestinian passage in place since the late 1990s. In fact, many businesspeople and travellers within the region and from further afield juggle a variety of passports and identification papers, often keeping one for use in Israel and another for surrounding Arab states, thus avoiding any potential palaver at passport control caused by the presence of the wrong stamps in the wrong place. The possibility of fake papers and the social life of genuine documents enables them to be manipulated and undermines any claims to sound identification. If people can play around with documents how can one trust them to tell the truth? Documents may actually produce more uncertainty when it comes to knowing who is who and who poses a threat.

Of course Israeli security officials are hardly unaware of the probability that people are not who they say they are, passing their security spot-checks with papers that are forged or fraudulent. In such situations legibility is lost. In fact an internal IDF investigation found that checkpoints and ID cards fail to provide foolproof prevention against Palestinians sneaking into Israel (Kelly 2008). At the start of the second *intifada* in September 2000 for example, Israeli soldiers and border guards were under detailed directions to keep watch for Palestinians presenting foreign or fake passports in order to pass through border controls. Stories of identity scams and forgery rings regularly hit the national news. Here are a selection of headlines and

stories from my time in Tel Aviv: “Six residents of east Jerusalem suspected of forging documents” (ynetnews.com 10.01 2007), “Palestinian woman arrested carrying fake ID” (ynetnews.com 06.12.2005), “Police arrested a 37-year-old Palestinian from Hebron for using false documents to pretend to be Jewish and to work as a guard at a building site in Raanana” (ynetnews.com 09.06.2005), “Islamic Jihad member and wanted terror suspect sent by fellow-activists to receive life-saving treatment in Tel Aviv hospital; man admitted with fake ID” (Paiz Abbas ynetnews.com 16.04.2006). In fact, Kelly (2008) points to estimates by former Israeli cabinet minister Meir Shetreet back in 2002 suggesting that up to 400,000 forged Israeli ID cards were in current circulation (haaretz.com 23.04.2002).

Documents are unstable and uncertain, unable to make a person visible or tell security staff everything they need to know. Documents may be fake and even if a document is the genuine article it cannot be depended on to tell you who a person really is. Here I would agree with Kelly who takes David Lyon’s famous description of identity documents as “tokens of trust” and twists it into a far more circumspect “artefacts of suspicion” (Lyon 2001: 305, Kelly 2008: 114). Rather than creating legible subjects, he argues, identity documents that may be fake or fiddled with produce their own forms of ignorance, concealing as much as they reveal. Such dodgy documents simply create even more uncertainty as security and immigration officials around the world try to tell safe subjects from treacherous terrorists. If documents cannot be trusted or cannot tell security staff what they need to know they must look elsewhere, just like Dudi and Adam.

The trouble with documents

However, Dudi and Adam were not concerned with forged or dubious documents. In fact they were not all that concerned with documents at all and rather more interested in the actual person. The pair rarely take documents at face value, preferring to examine actual faces instead. Documents only enter the picture after their own more physical figuring out. Yet the two security guards hardly have a clear alternative concept or cast iron image of who this *SHaBa*”*CH* might be. Adam said such *SHaBa*”*CH* signs could not be specified but were somehow self-evident; my

attempts to tie him down with description and detail a sometimes unwelcome obstacle to simply getting on with the search. And aside from an aptitude for reading or recognizing some vague sign of “Arab-ness”, or in Dudi’s case a great deal of “sniffing”, there seems to be no general description, no distinguishing features and no reliable way to tell one person from the next. “You can know people’s orange”, Adam would explain in his unique Hebrew-English Creole, causing preliminary confusion with his citrus-pronunciation of “origin” - “if a person is orange from Russia, *Mizrachi*, *Ashkenazi*, Ethiopian, but not where they live. It is very difficult in Israel with all the oranges and immigrants”.

The security staff themselves were no exception, and although I never came across a Palestinian-Arab security guard, the guards were an otherwise interesting reflection of Adam’s intricate “orange” mix. There was Avi just out of the army and with Iraqi and Israeli parents, Shlomit from a *Mizrachi* Moroccan family working part-time for cash to help subsidise college fees, Barak brought over from Ethiopia aged three, Andrei who first came from Russia in search of work eight years ago, Adam the *Ashkenazi Sabra* (native born Israeli) through and through, and Dudi the *SHaBa*”*CH* detector with his half Bedouin background. Distinguishing between Bedouin and Druze is nigh on impossible according to Adam, but Arab “tribes” or extended families are another case entirely and Adam was ever confident he could hazard a guess given a face or physique and estimate whether a person came from the North, or from East Jerusalem, from Gaza or the West Bank.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, in such contexts of complex backgrounds and common “oranges” it can be difficult to tell a Palestinian person from an Israeli citizen. The upshot is even more uncertainty, as guards accost the perfectly innocent bystander instead. During one of the more dreary days for instance, Dudi and I were joined by Roi, another guard, playing truant from his usual patrolling post indoors. “Here *SHaBa*”*CH*!” he suddenly declares, his face lit up, mouth open, pointing in the direction of a well-dressed man stepping into one of the mini-van service taxis bound for Jerusalem. “No, no, he is an Indian” counters Dudi, shaking his head and raising the challenge. “Come on check! I say he is an Indian” he says with aplomb and off

we troop to question our potential *SHaBa*”*CH* and settle the score. Dudi runs his usual routine, greeting the man, asking where he is from and finally demanding ID. “What is this, you people have checked me twice this week” sighs the suspect, stepping out of the taxi, his fellow passengers paying little attention, and handing over a distinctly Indian looking passport. Dudi gives it a cursory glance, grins, and wishing the man well turns away triumphantly; “See? I know these things” he says, “I have been working here for six years and I know who is a *SHaBa*”*CH*!”

On another occasion Adam stopped a group of smartly dressed men whom, it turned out, were actually architects from Haifa (Israel’s northern port city) , rushing to renew some paperwork at a ministry in the centre of town and none too happy at being held up and harassed by some over-scrupulous security staff. And, time-after-time, innocent Jewish-Israeli or Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel were stopped and questioned, received a “good day” or “good health” for their trouble and went on their way.

Rather than documents, Dudi and Adam are really looking at persons, and not just any old persons without a permit – Palestinians without a permit. Identity documents (or their absence) simply provide a perfunctory confirmation of information they have read by other, more physical bodily means. But stopping someone who looks Palestinian-Arab is clearly - keeping in mind the cases of mistaken or misread identity above - inconsistent and uncertain. There is a strong sense that there is a person that “exceeds its documentation” (Coutin and Yngvesson 2006: 179) and that the security and social world is composed of “more than the play of documents” (Coutin, Maurer and Yngvesson 2002). That is, there is a more stable, certain form of knowing beyond documents and lying elsewhere - so that clearly the skinny dark haired teenager Adam has just apprehended, smoking cigarettes and staring at his dusty trainers, cannot really be from Ramle (a so-called mixed Arab-Jewish town south east of Tel Aviv) as he claims because he “has a face from Ramallah” (principal Palestinian town in the West Bank). What is more he is without ID. Adam flicks through the teenager’s wallet, holding a wad of West Bank business cards in his hand. “What is written here? Ramallah!” he reads aloud, waving card after card

in the air. “What is written here? Ramallah!! What is written here? Ramallah!!!” Finally taking it as proof of his initial *SHaBa*”*CH* suspicions and marching him off for a spot of police questioning. Documentary identification intertwines with more cultural notions of belonging.

There are uncertainties at the boundaries of belonging; a tension between who has documents and who is felt or believed to belong. Yet, unlike the literature which suggests uncertainty stems from the inherent instabilities of identity documents themselves, the uncertainties of *SHaBa*”*CH* detection lie in looking at persons not papers. Documents do not work not because they may be counterfeit or cannot be trusted to tell a security guard who a person is, but because Dudi and Adam are preoccupied with actual persons and are not looking for documents or papers per se but for Palestinians without papers. Questions of identification “who is this person” are surpassed by questions of collective identity “what kind of a person is this?” (see Caplan and Torpey 2001:3). So while *SHaBa*”*CH* spotting is ostensibly cloaked in the language of legality – “present un-legally” – and legibility, Dudi and Adam pay little attention to actual papers or legal notions of who belongs (permit-holders) and rather more to the body behind the document. Adam suspects the boy is a *SHaBa*”*CH* not because he finds he has no ID but because “he has a face from Ramallah”. The lack of permits simply confirms his previous suspicions as documentary and legal definitions of citizenship come up against more cultural notions of belonging.

I began to wonder why Dudi and Adam bother to search for a seemingly harmless *SHaBa*”*CH* when it is so difficult to tell who is who. The answer is because their *bitachon* is not just about suspicion or fear; it is also fun. *SHaBa*”*CH* spotting and security must also be explored as a form of enjoyment.

Pleasure

Despite the disinterest in documents and difficulties with identification when it comes down to it *SHaBa*”*CH* seeking is fun, a source of congenial competition and a

chance to put one over on the local police⁹. Dudi and Adam compare scores and grin with apparent glee at every *SHaBa"CH* they snatch. Indeed, *SHaBa"CH* searching seems more about bolstering bravado; more about fun than any serious surveillance. On one of our foot patrols for example, Adam stops a young man wearing baggy jeans and a scruffy tee and in a flash the plodding patrol switches from humdrum to fun. He looks deflated as Adam demands documents, stares silently and hands over his green (West Bank) ID card. Adam takes a quick look, takes the man by the arm and says "See: a *SHaBa"CH*!" to me - his only audience - before ushering us both on a short-cut through the terminal and straight into the local police station, presenting his charge with an enormous grin. As we quick-march along he quietly explains that the man comes from a small village near Ramallah but has no permit to be here in Israel. Meanwhile the young man in question says little and without a struggle seemingly complies with his capture. "He knows he'll be out of here in half an hour" Adam sighs. The local police – much to Adam's chagrin – usually conduct a short interview before sending a *SHaBa"CH* on their way, perhaps concerned with more pressing criminal affairs.

The entire episode is over in a matter of minutes. Nobody stops to look, enquire or even blink an eye. Such sights it seems are simply unremarkable, part of the rhythms and routine of passing through security gates and guarded space. And so as the man sits awaiting his police interview Adam leans on the counter and smiles away, joking with officers on duty, filling out his official statement and evidently enjoying all the extra attention. "I am pleased I caught him" he confirms as we leave. At these times Adam enjoys the work and feels useful; to be providing the public with protection or to be doing *bitachon*. I ask whether apprehending a *SHaBa"CH* means he did a good job? "Not a good job, I did my job" comes his no nonsense reply as he shifts his weapon, calls in the incident to central control and, fun over, we get back to more pedestrian patrolling matters.

Josiah Heyman (1995) describes a similar mix of fun and futility amongst US immigration officials searching for intruders along the Mexican border. Despite the

⁹ Catching *SHaBa"CHim* was also the responsibility of officers from the local police station.

daily frustrations as they deal with legal loopholes and dependency on rapid arrest and release turnovers for federal funds, collectively conspiring to create a continuous cycle of entry and arrest, INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) officials simply balance their feelings of fruitlessness with fun. “I enjoy my job, I have fun – since it is a game of tag and catch – I see if I can catch more than anybody else, or how I catch them...come up on a group on a trail, scare them half to death, that’s fun and satisfaction (an officer named “Miller”, Heyman 1995: 270). As with these Mexican chasing immigration officers Dudi and Adam’s *SHaBa”CH* entertainment is almost entirely one-sided and all about showing off; some informal rivalry mixed with pride and a dash of prestige. How many could you spot compared to the other guard, how quickly and how well? I often found myself the uncomfortable and unwitting accomplice to such antics as Dudi teased some *SHaBa”CH* on the way to the police station, switching from Hebrew to Arabic and back again. “You are lucky I caught you” he says to one Nablus youth nabbed without a permit. “She is from England and in England they do not speak to you nicely, they grab you by the legs!” he says, pointing and flashing a wink in my direction. I cringe, aware of my own complicity in these obnoxious goings on. There is a kind of vindictive violence at work here, a vehemence which appears as both a legitimate action and illegitimate violation. It is by turns a legitimate check on illegal persons who are perceived as a possible danger, and an illegitimate intrusion and intimidation of persons, as guards stop people based on simply a “sniff” and a sense, picking on potential illegals and possible Palestinians.

This violence, as Oskar Verkaaik (2003) contends, can be “fun”. In his own fun-filled, action-packed accounts of popular political movements in 1980’s Hyderabad, his informants tell of “tall tales” and transgressions, of violence which erupts within carnivalesque acts of collective vandalism, and through which a new generation of Muhajir leaders were born. Muhajir communities are made up of migrant families who after partition travelled from India to Pakistan and settled in Karachi, Hyderabad and other southern cities. The violence Verkaaik depicts is not simply pathological or delinquent; it is profoundly productive and only interpretable against the backdrop of a specific – in this case Muhajir - history and “culture” (see Whitehead 2004: 65,

Das, Kleinman, Ramphela and Reynolds 2000). Within the context of post-partition Muhajir experience, ethnic politics in Pakistan and collective memories of persecution among the “common people”, Verkaaik shows violence as a key and constructive component in the strengthening of community and the creation of an independent Muhajir movement. The day MQM¹⁰ supporters invaded the Pakka Qila part of town, gave powerful speeches and played loud music, paraded with flags and firearms, burned and looted Pashtun property is remembered as a day of ethnic liberation and exuberance (Verkaaik 2003). Violence emerges in conjunction with a kind of unbridled playfulness. The night the Archaeological Department of the university was expelled from its buildings is recalled as a festive fight against the forces of the state and the forging of new masculine and Muhajir identities. Acts of collective aggression and camaraderie, humiliating ethnic rivals and state officials was joyful, adventurous and above all fun (Verkaaik 2003). Whilst we are not talking about such visceral or extreme forms of violence in the context of Tel Aviv security checks, the “everyday” intimidation of suspects that I encountered cannot be understood without an appreciation of the ways in which it is enjoyable.

The violence of street-level *bitachon* appears neither so physical nor so destructive. In fact the security check is a practice presumably intended to protect citizens against violent terrorist attack and yet on the other hand there is the violence security staff may unleash on people they think are *SHaBa*”CH – that somewhat unpredictable or arbitrary event in which someone is stopped at a security check and asked for his or her identity card. The arbitrariness of the encounter i.e. whether or not one is picked out or expects to be picked out, is dependent on who one is – a Jewish-Israeli, an Indian tourist, a Palestinian-Arab citizen. And while I would argue this is neither the violent potentiality Victoria Sanford (2004) depicts in the aggressive antics of machine-gun toting soldiers, holding guns to the heads of local youths at a military checkpoint in Barranca, Columbia, nor what Thomas Blom-Hansen (2006) notes as the often deadly violence exercised by private security forces in South Africa, the guards’ capricious questioning and stopping of particular people is fraught with uncertainty and partiality which while not threatening the possibility of physical

¹⁰ Muhajir Qaumi Movement – Muhajir political party based on Muhajir identity politics

violence is rooted in the marking of that person as a suspicious and questionable subject. It emerges also in the arrogant teasing and intimidation, in the persecutory play with a person one has apprehended. Moreover, it is a violence that produces profound pleasure in one's own occupational expertise.

Rather than the celebratory collective violence Verkaaik (2003) describes, the fun of the *SHaBa"CH* search lies in the picking out of particular people and a sense of pleasure at one's own catching capabilities. Such *SHaBa"CH* expertise earned certain kudos amongst security staff, separating the great from the merely good security guard. This was part of the reason why this particular pair of guards were almost always put on outdoor patrol whilst others were more permanently consigned to the far less interesting inner recesses of the station mall. We can recognise this in Adam's grinning excitement as well as his more modest "I did my job" nonchalance, in Dudi's "I know who is a *SHaBa"CH*!" as well as his complaints about the latest batch of security recruits. "It sucks, I am the only guard looking for *SHaBa"CH* these days" he moaned when the three of us met, several months after Adam had resigned, attracted by the relative welfare perks of the Israel Prisons Service. "The new checkers are losers; they can't do anything" he whinged, lamenting the loss of his colleague and a drastic decline in *SHaBa"CH* catching standards.

Yet all fun aside, this pleasurable intimidation is also productive of a particular prejudice, or rather a peculiarly racialized idea of who is less likely to belong and who is more likely to be dangerous, as documentary practices and legal concepts of citizenship rub up alongside more cultural notions of difference and danger. A *SHaBa"CH*, the security guards assured me, is potentially more dangerous than a legal paper-carrying person – who knows they might be working for a terrorist organisation, surreptitiously scoping out the place for a future attack – and more likely than not a Palestinian. Dudi's *SHaBa"CH* sensitive sense of smell for instance is no literal telling technique but more a metaphor for an inkling that someone is Arab, an instinctive idea or tacit way of telling he always found hard to describe. Seemingly technical practices of documentary governance are shot through with

racialized notions of danger; less to do with who looks like they have no papers and more to do with who looks Palestinian.

Concluding remarks

Adam and Dudi's *SHaBa*"*CH* spotting security practice shows that when it comes to reading danger documents and papers do not work. *SHaBa*"*CH* detection lies not in the uncertainties of documentary proof of citizenship, legal and legitimate presence, so much as precarious bodily perceptions and acting persons. Security is proximate and personal. As one man waiting his checking turn in the security line put it, "an ID is not a bomb, but a bag could be a bomb!" - a document is not deadly but a body or a bag could prove fatal. It is actual bodies - bodies which may be strapped with bombs - which people are scared of after all. It has less to do with the actual identity documents themselves and more to do with the question what kind of person is this? Who is who and who belongs?

This chapter has examined how despite techniques of telling people without papers and taking pleasure in their own *SHaBa*"*CH* spotting expertise documentary detections are far from clear, shot through with racialized concepts of who belongs and who is suspicious. The themes surrounding racialized notions of knowing and danger that have emerged within this *SHaBa*"*CH* chasing ethnography are expanded in the following chapter as we confront reading for real danger in the form of the scary suspect and suicide bomber. Chapter three explores how security staff read danger off bodies as they look to comportment and composure, corporeal sights, sounds, and signs of suspicion. As is beginning to become apparent, the ethnography works against the idea that security-surveillance is somehow "about" legibility. Rather, the many uncertainties and various tactics and techniques of trying to tell or read danger and suspicion through security practices may point instead to ways in which security is both experienced and undone through the illegibility of its own practices, documents and deeds (see Das and Poole 2004: 9-10).

Chapter three: Reading danger off bodies and race

Arriving at the station one morning I found all attention focussed on Roi's heroic exploits, catching a knife carrying *chashud* (a suspect) the previous day; the anthropologist like the muddled civil guards in the introduction, missing out on all the "action". He was just going about his selecting job, Roi tells me over a quick break, when he spied "someone suspicious". The man had the look of someone "strange", "not normal" and he "looked like an Arab" to boot. He was acting nervous and agitated, "walking back and forth, back and forth. When you see someone like that maximum (odds are) there's something wrong" he said. It was then that Roi spied what looked like a large knife poking out of the man's jacket pocket and before he knew what he was doing he had hit the hand, grabbed the man's arms behind his back, retrieved the knife and marched him off to the police. "My luck was he had a knife and not a bomb" Roi sighed, fidgeting with his chair and clearly wishing to be done with my questions and back at work. Once apprehended and arrested the *chashud* admitted to coming from Jenin with a plan to kill Jews, making Roi the unassuming station hero of the day. This was the first time in a few years that a *chashud* had been caught red-handed thanks to the suspect-spotting skills of security staff and for one day his story was the hot topic of conversation, until fresh concerns came to the fore and everyone got back to *bitachon* business as usual.

This chapter explores the ways in which bodies become a basis for reading danger and a tactile template of suspicion. What made Roi's *chasud* suspicious? How could Roi tell he was "strange" and "not normal"? We begin with bodily sights and sounds before exploring dispositions and demeanour, stereotypes, strangers and demography, zigzagging back and forth as guard's specific suspicions rub up against more cultural notions of danger and belonging. Following the strategies of guards on the lookout for security suspects this chapter will trace the ways in which Israel's intimate populations trouble the patency of the body and highlight a critical "legible" paradox – that security practices aimed at reading and revealing dangerous bodies actually produce more illegibility, uncertainty and suspicion.

Specific signs

At the security check, surveillance's predictive preoccupations are more anatomical than abstract; danger detection lies not in the document but is bound up with the body. For the most part all eyes are not on the look-out for paperless *SHaBa*"CH but for bodily signs of a potential terrorist. Here, the will to legibility is a security and surveillance affect focussed on bodies, bodies seen as both familiar and opaque, as objects of intrigue and fear. Security staff check over actual limbs and body parts, personal bags and belongings as people stand right there in front of them. The security gaze constantly scans this corporeal scene for signs – of the criminal, the terrorist, the suicide bomber – in an attempt to know bodies, to read danger and reveal disguise, to render bodies transparent and ultimately known. As Talal Asad notes suspicion "seeks to penetrate a mask to the unpleasant reality behind" (Asad 2004: 285). A body may be safe or it may show signs of danger; a body may be carrying bombs. As such security-surveillance is sensuous, i.e. it is of the senses, as security staff strive to see who seems suspicious, to read danger off bodies, to touch and feel for suspicious signs. The result is a surveillance of suspicion, as security staff seek out the suspicious person (*chashud*) or object (*chefetz chashud*), trained more or less and some not at all, to read off bodily signs of suspicion.¹¹

Coming from the verb *lachshod* meaning to suspect, *chashud* was used interchangeably by security staff and civil guards as a noun = a suspect, and as an adjective = someone or something suspicious. In the case of policing and penology this *chashud* could be any kind of miscreant or criminal suspect but in the case of my security staff informants a "suspect" is almost always a potential terrorist. And so security guards constantly keep an eye out for signs of the suspect (*chashud*) or "suspish" as Guy says, a grizzled security guard in his forties, his face reddened by shifts in the sun, one hand on his gun, the other flicking ash from the end of a cigarette, as we stand in the shade watching people pass through his security patch. Such suspicious sights and signs include someone wrapped in a big thick coat in the

¹¹ According to Israel's Channel Seven news site, in March 2008 the Knesset ruled on security guards taking on weapons licensing and training responsibilities from private companies with a view to more comprehensive training for all security staff. www.israelnationalnews.com 04.03.2008.

summer heat (suicide bombers have been known to conceal bomb-belts beneath jackets and anoraks), someone running for no apparent reason, someone sweating profusely, or someone whose clothing and gestures seem shady or suspect in some way.

I was no exception to such suspicious screening. As I was studying away the security staff and civil guards were also monitoring, observing and interpreting my actions and appearance, busy determining my suitability, my intentions and my very own degree of suspicion. As I was watching the watchers they were also watching me. To begin with many security staff were convinced I was some sort of journalist or worse a company spy, sent to snitch on inadequate working practice and inflammatory opinion. Mark Button (2007) notes some similar spy suspicions amongst the security officers he observed at “Pleasure Southquay”, an indoor retail and leisure centre in the south of England. Security staff, he suggests, have suspicious minds, required to be suspicious and on the lookout for risks by the very nature of security work (Button 2007: 166). Officers were sure that there was more to Button than the researcher that met the eye; that behind the criminologist cover he was really a traitorous management mole (Button 2007).

In my case several guards regularly double-checked that their words or actions were not destined for management ears, usually after some angry outburst or after sneaking a surreptitious cigarette. Yet with time most were reassured that my research had no connection with their boss or their job prospects and while I was always regarded as something of an oddity some staff became eager informants happy to have me stand by their sides as they worked. Others remained sceptical despite my best attempts to explain, firm in the belief that an anthropologist was simply a spy. And whilst some remained aware and slightly suspicious of the anthropologist in their midst, others, in particular the civil guards, quickly viewed me as an honorary member of the gang. Even the chief at our local guard base, having first assumed I was either suspicious or else a complete crackpot, soon came to call me “one of us”, as exposed to his ridicule and wrath as everyone else on the team. “There is nothing I can tell you, you have been one of us for months” he replied to

my final conversation request, declining the offer to add to my interview archive. I suspect this was simply a flattering tactic on his part enabling him to escape my last minute questions and head outside for a quiet cigarette instead.

Security staff were not the only suspicious types about, I was also suspicious of them and their work, what they said and what they did, never taking these things purely at face value, and always wanting to know more about what security practice was actually doing. Indeed, from the perspective of the inquisitive field researcher anthropology is a rather suspicious discipline itself; our ethnographic quests may well be collaborative but we rarely simply take our informants' or interlocutors' word for it, adding our own observations, interpretations and analysis along the way. However, I was not the only one busily participating, observing and interpreting the activity of *bitachon*. Such so called anthropological methods or tools were not restricted to the anthropologist herself. As I watched security staff they watched the people around them, as I interpreted their appearances, actions and activities they interpreted the appearance, actions and activities of other people, trying to tell who might be dangerous, trying to read danger off bodies. As I struggled to participate and recognize their suspicious signs I realised the two practices – anthropology and security – are not so far apart. The modalities of anthropology and *bitachon* blurred and overlapped as standing at the security gate becomes observation and interpretation out “in the field”. The problems of representation and interpretation are not the privileged domain of anthropology. In their suspicious screening of public passers-by, security staff also watch and read off bodies and behaviour, aware of how they present themselves and how they check, questioning their activities and ability to interpret as I did mine.

Rachel, a Friday *shuk* shift (market shift) regular and fastidious civil guard watcher, reads danger off bodies by looking at faces, features and into the eyes, “windows to the soul” she calls them, for suspicious signs or signals. The civil guard are volunteers with the community police as opposed to full time security staff, some of whom specialise in traffic control and license checks, others patrolling and responding to all kinds of trouble from burglaries to boisterous teenagers. For the

most part our activities were patrolling and looking out for suspicious people, potential terrorists and troublemakers, at community events, mass public rallies, on the night-time streets and every Friday morning at the market. The team calls these mobile patrols or static suspect spotting activities “*BaTaSH*”, an abbreviation of *bitachon shotef* or “routine security”, an army term usually associated with counter-terrorism and security operations in the West Bank and Gaza or along national borders and buffer zones. While some may scoff at the use of military terms for a bunch of part-time civil guards the volunteers take their own version of *BaTaSH* very seriously.

We stand at the narrow entrance to the *shuk* with a mother and daughter selling shorts and shirts to one side and an elderly gent setting out his headscarves and hair bobbles to the other. Our cadre of volunteers – Barak grumbling about his lack of a walkie-talkie and Yaron ignoring Barak’s tantrums and staring silently ahead – scan the approaching jumble of people, the crowds crossing the road and coming to do their weekly groceries, the shoppers queuing for freshly baked breads, the old folks resting on chairs, and the group of fans surrounding a former singing starlet, now busking and belting out her well known hits on the street. The three of them form a fragile human barrier; Rachel with her uniform ironed and immaculate, Barak in a crumpled police baseball cap and bum-bag, and Yaron the veteran of the bunch, his faded civil guard tee stretched over his belly, watching as people pass between them and into the packed alleyways of the market proper. They warn people to zip up bags and put away cell phones; their pick-pocket precautions against petty theft mingling with the task of terrorist detection. Pickpockets and *piguim* (suicide bombings) rub alongside one another as guarding practice slides betwixt and between different kinds of *bitachon*. “I look at hands, for wires” Rachel continues, returning to the topic of terrorist detection, her fingers fastened on her walkie-talkie, eyes flickering. “We’re not the fashion police for all the silly things people wear, but you see the jacket that man’s wearing?” pointing at a man in a puffy black anorak, “it’s appropriate for a day like today, but in summer this would be suspicious”. Suspicions change with the seasons. She tells one woman to close her bag, asks a man to lift his tee and show

whether the bump on his hip is a firearm or cell phone clip (it is the latter), and goes back to surveilling the social scene.¹²

However, suspicious signs are not confined to the realm of visual observation. Security staff pay close attention not only to physical appearance, wires and “windows to the soul”, but also listen out for specific sounds. Guards and selectors listen for language, accents and ask questions: “Hello”, “How are you?” or “Where are you going?”, initiating conversation in order to confirm any suspicions they might have, find out if a person is Jewish Israeli, Palestinian, or a foreigner like me, and figure out their level of suspicion accordingly (see also Ben-Ari 1998, Helman 1997, Libes and Blum-Kulka 1994, Paine 1992). Security-surveillance is not simply looking, it is also listening in. I was sometimes asked “How are you?” or hailed with a “Hello” while waiting at bus stops or standing in security lines, a friendly façade barely masking the more familiar interrogative intent. More importantly such sound suspicions appear to be less to do with specific, quite objective signs such as anoraks and wires and rather more to do with reading suspicion linguistically, phonetic markers, phenotypes and cultural notions of danger.

It is not only accent but also the absence of sound or speech which seems suspicious. According to security guards, psychological studies and eye witness accounts of suicide bombers and terrorist attackers are often said to be in such a state of stupor that they do not respond to questions or requests. Another sign of suspicion, so says Adam, and another reason why he always asks a question and seeks an answer or acknowledgment from his suspects. As I sit and sip coffee with Smadar one chilly morning, perching on her *selector*’s table whilst we wait for commuters to arrive at her security gate a man suddenly appears from nowhere and walks our way. I slip off my seat in a jiffy - I am not supposed to be sitting about and distracting Smadar - and watch events unfold from the security sidelines. He tries to pass, arms firmly folded across his chest, a cap pulled down over his face and his eyes hidden behind a pair of sunglasses. “Good morning” says Smadar, leaping to attention. The man says nothing and moves forward without a word: if his outfit were not enough he is surely

¹² Israelis are able to own and carry a gun but must have a valid license in order to do so.

suspicious now. “Good morning” she repeats, side-stepping to block his path and picking up her *magnometer*. “Lift your arms please” Smadar says, this time with added urgency, *magnometer* at the ready, shoulders squared. Still no answer. And again, “Lift your arms!” she says. The man, now inches from her body, stops, acquiesces and lifts up his arms. There is a metal detector “bleep, bleep”, a lift of his sweater and lo and behold a machine gun lies taped to his tummy. Smadar frowns as he smiles, slowly removes the glasses and the cap and then the tension finally breaks as she whoops, sighs and wraps her arms around the gun-toting “terrorist”.

Our silent suspect turns out to be none other than one of Smadar’s security supervisors cunningly disguised as a potential *chashud* and carrying out a series of routine tests to keep his staff on their toes. He congratulates Smadar on her rapid reactions and picking up his props passes through the gate and on to examine staff elsewhere. “Woa that was scary. Look!” Smadar says, letting out a long breath and holding out her hands. They are shaking with the involuntary tremors of a body that betrays its own fear; a physiological sign of those suspense-filled seconds. The phoney had been frightening, and, excitement over she smiles and settles back with a congratulatory – if a little shaky – cigarette.

All this listening in is given a comical twist by Nimrod Kamer (2005) and his short mokumentary “Ilan the security guard”, which shines a satirical light on security practice and its people. As the introductory credits roll up associations between suspicion and linguistic ability appear loud and clear: “In 2005 almost 70,000 security guards are employed in Israel. They are considered to be 4.7% of the total work force in Israel. About 1/3 of them work in the public transport system. These security guards ask pedestrians questions in order to verify that they speak Hebrew in a non-suspicious accent (=the common Israeli Jewish accent). The most frequent question is “How are you?” Any attempt not to answer the question is considered to be an unusual and outsmarting reaction. This is the story of Ilan.” Speaking with a Jewish Israeli accent appears safe whilst everyone else is suspicious by default.



Figure 5: Ilan the security guard www.avriri.com

We follow Nimrod the straight-man interviewer and his scruffy comic sidekick Ilan as he impersonates a security guard and patrols the streets of Jerusalem waving to members of the public and asking “How are you?”, “Everything’s okay?”, and “What’s up?”, looking not quite the part in his homemade security attire. But rather than the rude or matter-of-fact manner of many security staff as they try to recognize accent and interpret intonation Ilan is all smiles and sincerity, “I also smile a lot; it’s common courtesy” he says to the camera. His literal, comically naïve interpretation of security illuminates the real suspicious and sceptical side of real life security practice. Most guards are not asking after people’s wellbeing but trying to ascertain whether or not they are dangerous. Ilan greets people at a bus-stop, helps a woman with her bags and makes sure people are keeping well hydrated in the hot weather, even checking one man has enough cash to buy himself an ice cream. Oblivious to suicide bombers, terrorists and even the Occupation, Ilan sees security as a caring, sharing kind of profession, on a mission to spread peace and harmony amongst his fellow citizens. While Nimrod associates security guards with threats and danger, Ilan sees only one threat, that of the lonely, isolated man on the street; the person who just needs someone to notice, to take care and to ask him “How are you?”.

In addition to all the speech sounds and suspicious accents security staff also contend with the ubiquitous “beep beep”, “weeoowee” of the *magnometer* providing a musical accompaniment to almost every security check. But like other documentary technologies this piece of metal-detecting kit cannot read danger. A metal detector

can only tell you if a body or bag is concealing or contains a piece of metal. It cannot tell you whether it belongs to a gun or a knife, a button, a belt-buckle or a bomb. It takes further inspection by hand to tell whether all the electronic beeps and buzzes are suspicious or benign and as far as I can gather the jury is still out on the usefulness of this particular guarding gadget. Some selectors seemingly wave it absentmindedly, some people think it does nothing, while others pay attention to every vibration, beep or buzz; an electronic extension of their security senses. “Do you know why it’s called a *magrometer*?” asks the security impresario Ilan. “No why?” Nimrod replies. “Because it protects” he says in a comical punch-line play on Hebrew words (Kamer 2005). “*Magen*” means “protect” and shares the same Hebrew root - M G N - as *magrometer*.¹³ Its purpose according to Ilan is protect and provide a sense of safety and truth. On screen we see a close up of Ilan holding his beloved “protector” and realise it is home-made and cobbled together - a cardboard cut-out stuck together with sticky-tape - a verbal and visual satire of the security check, calling the effectiveness of the *magrometer* metal detector into critical and comical question.

Yet all these suspicious sights and sounds brought me no closer to recognizing or reading who was and was not a dangerous suspect. “This is the problem with security” Adam explains one day as we discuss the difficulties of reading danger and deciding how to react. He begins pointing at people across the street, demonstrating how hard it is to judge suspicion, to see signs of wires or suicide vests from a distance. Do you shoot a suspect on sight? Or, do you wait until you are sure, until the danger is definite? “It is no good just to point a gun, they should have grabbed his hands and kicked him and got him down to the ground” he says, reflecting on a suicide bombing outside a shopping mall in the coastal town of Netanya just a few weeks earlier. Security staff had not acted swiftly enough according to Adam’s analysis, and the opinions of every other security guard I spoke with in the weeks following the attack. But such security conundrums cannot be solved with a shot or two in hindsight. With one pull of the trigger you could be a “hero” or a “murderer” he shrugs, summing up the unreliable uncertainties of specific signs and symbols. It

¹³ Most Hebrew words are based on a three-consonant root. Words with similar meanings will contain the same three root letters.

is not so easy to read specific signs and sounds off bodies. In reality such signs of suspicion are far from stable and specific, and far more fractured, contradictory and confused. Reading danger seems riddled with tensions and contradictions - bearing in mind guards' accent attentions - between reading off specific signs and more abstract perceptions of safety and suspicion.

As should be clear by now, all this talk of reading off specific signs, accents and appearances is not to say that security staff necessarily have a clear notion of what they are defending, what they are looking for or even who the enemy might be. The enemy's body remains unknown and unidentifiable aside from some hard to spot specific signs and linguistic sounds. Peter Galison points to a similar kind of opaque opponent in his history of cybernetic science (Galison 1994). Developed by Norbert Wiener as a mid-20th century military strategy designed to simulate and annihilate the movements of enemy aircraft, this "science-as-steersman" was premised on attempts to outwit not just any enemy but a particular kind of enemy (Galison 1994: 26). The opponent cybernetics inventors had in mind was the opaque and uncertain "Manichean" other: a manipulative and unknown adversary who will use any and all available tactics in order to triumph (Galison 1994). Security staff similarly surveil for an uncertain and tricky type of enemy; a "smart bomb" (Hoffman 2006), able to dress up in disguise and change tactics mid-mission, perhaps picking out a more heavily crowded target before blowing up (see also Ganor 2005, Savitch 2005). However, unlike the statistical and systematic construction that Wiener worked with the potential enemy at the security gates is a very visceral and physical human adversary.

Briefing a rather bedraggled bunch of *shuk*-shift civil guards; mostly gossiping pensioners with a teenager or two thrown in and an anthropologist on the side, before our "terrorist enemy action" shift the community police chief warns us to be on red alert. Secret service spooks have sent a specific warning for Tel Aviv and we are to keep a special watch for anyone suspicious. This may be a woman, may be a couple holding hands, or may even be a religious Jew he cautions - an appropriate warning given the previous week's West Bank bombing in which the assailant dressed in

religious disguise and thumbed a lift from an unsuspecting Israeli settler before detonating. Rachel, a perfectionist in all matters *mishmar ezrachi* (civil guard) reads off religious-looking Jews from time to time – men in black suits and hats, women wearing headscarves and long clothing – and quizzes them on the Torah portion title for the week; second nature knowledge for any genuinely observant Jew and an easy way to expose an orthodox imposter. It is her way of getting beneath the opaque body and an attempt to find out who is behind a potential disguise.

In such uncertain circumstances and with such unknown enemies a suspect “could be anyone” as Adam, Rachel and the others often reminded me. But the parameters for security practice are hardly agreed upon or universally acknowledged, differing from place to place and person to person. “You must check everyone, even an old lady” explained Aviv, a young *selector* with dreams of entering the *SHaBaK*, taking time out from flexing his biceps to take me through his personal security protocols.¹⁴ “She may go to the toilet, someone puts something in her bag, thinks she won’t be checked” he continues, as the sphere of suspicion seems to engulf “anyone” and everyone. Seconds later the *selector* adjacent begins checking through an elderly woman’s bag, “Why? Does she look like she has a bomb?” he says, smiling at the woman and dismissing Aviv’s logic with a wave of his hand. One person’s shady suspect is another’s upright citizen.

While in theory one should look to “anyone” many security staff, like Aviv’s co-*selector*, have certain, more selective suspicions, oscillating between “anyone” and “Arabs”. The vast majority of martyrdom attacks against Israeli citizens have been perpetrated by Palestinians; a rationale that repeatedly cropped up amongst security staff during our casual on-duty conversations. Dangers to the security of the Israeli state and individual citizens are often seen as stemming from particular forms of Palestinian nationalist struggle as well as radical forms of Islamic practice in the region. Add to this the little reported (outside of Israel) incidence of attackers crossing borders from the occupied territories minus their munitions only to pick up their vests, belts and bombs at safe houses inside Israel itself (Savitch 2005). In East

¹⁴ *SHaBaK*, the Hebrew acronym for *Sherut Bitachon Klali*, or General Security Service, is Israel’s internal security service commonly known in English as *Shin Bet*.

Jerusalem some Palestinian citizens have been arrested and a handful even convicted of aiding and abetting acts of terror (see for example haaretz.com 30.May 2003, 02 August 2003; Hazam and Felsenstein 2004). Suspicion may unsurprisingly be associated with particular kinds of people. Moreover many security staff cut their security and combat teeth during compulsory military service on the borders or within the West Bank, with all the attendant volatile situations and asymmetric power relations vis-à-vis Palestinian populations (see for example Ben-Ari 1998, Freedman 2008, Yiftachel 2006). And so while Ronit, swinging her magnometer and launching into another round of *bitachon* basics between checks, tells me she looks for an “Arab” face, she simultaneously scans for “something weird”, someone strange or anyone acting out of place. What does an “Arab” look like anyway? Big coats, stray wires or an “Arab” accent alone are not certain enough; one has to look to other signs of suspicion.

Security staff assume a suspicious stance, seeking out who seems out of place or not to fit. Guards and selectors work with intuition and instinct, reading danger off less specific signs of suspicion revealed in comportment and composure. Security thus becomes a very visceral sense of suspicion. “It’s also intuition” Sharon says; a middle-aged *selector* who works for one of the major private security companies and who finds herself shunted from security pillar to post, one day working a craft market, the next standing outside a cinema. We met one evening for a cup of post-shift coffee and a chance to get her security thoughts. Sharon had just finished rattling off a list of suspicious signs from dark skin to Arab accent before getting to the more visceral heart of the matter. “When you work in this job a lot you get a feeling and you just know that something is not right” she says. The suspect is no longer the non-citizen *SHaBa*”*CH* or the big coat and wire-wearing person with an Arab accent. He or she is the one with the strange, peculiar or slightly abnormal behaviour, or perhaps behaviour so normal that it seems suspicious. The suspect is the odd or anomalous other.

Joanna Bourke (2005) charts a catalogue of “strangers”, suspects and bogeymen which plagued and panicked twentieth century Britons and Americans, from the

rapist to radiation, the paedophile to pollution, cancer to criminals; and the list goes on. Perhaps the *chashud* is another such shadowy and anomalous stranger. And is this stranger security staff seek out just anybody or is he or she a particular “Arab” body? Rafi, working in security since he left the army a year and a half ago explains how he looks for “someone who looks different, strange, for example wearing a big coat in summertime, then of course there are the people who are just strange and sometimes it is difficult to know the difference”, summarising the strange uncertainties of security and suspicion.

Security guards seem to rely on reading bodies for demeanour or disposition and a certain kind of categorical common sense. There is no special system or set of criteria as such, but a sense or feeling of something strange or slightly out of place. It was all pragmatic, matter of fact activity, and while certainly not so cohesive as what Geertz calls “common sense as a cultural system”, still exhibits all the ad hoc characteristics and complexities he describes; patent, practical and above all full of uncertain sense (Geertz 1983). Smadar could tell immediately that something was suspicious as her silent *chashud* advanced. Besides the specific signs – the cap, the glasses, the silence – his stiff body stood out as unusual and out of keeping with the more casual manner of her regular security “customers”. Roi also sensed that something was wrong way before he spotted the knife; his suspect simply seemed a bit shift, “strange” and curiously out of place. But Roi’s stranger and suspect also happened to be an “Arab”. Do guards read off danger or difference? Do they look out for specific signs or fuzzy physiques and phenotypes? Despite the talk of “anyone”, “anywhere”, the odd or anomalous other, the suspect, like the *SHaBa*”*CH* is most likely to be Palestinian.

And so although a *chashud* may well be “anyone” some people seem more suspicious than others. A call comes over Adam’s radio for example, asking for advice about “two dark men” approaching Gate 3. Adam looks towards them and smiles, “they are just service taxi drivers from Ramle” he replies to his caller, waving to the familiar pair. Smadar shows me how she switches her *magrometer* from “vibrate” to “sound” if she is checking an Arab, just to make sure no sign of metal or

ammunition slips by unnoticed. Hannah demonstrates how she checks Arabs more carefully, “you have to go around the stomach, around the back, even the ass” she says, slowly moving the *magnometer* down to my ankles.

For others the associations seem much less ambiguous. One typical evening at civil guard HQ, after a half hour smoking cigarettes, watching the formidable “super nanny” solve another parenting crisis and waiting for our fellow volunteers to arrive, off we finally zoom in our van; myself, Hadar the resident speed demon, and a boyfriend-girlfriend pair called Boaz and Dana in the back. Here we are, ready and “looking for action”, out to capture suspects and catch criminals. It is a Friday night shift which means “action” almost always equals a mixture of Arabs and A-team antics as Hadar – hitting the siren and somehow managing to drive whilst nibbling sunflower seeds, smoking and sticking his head out the side-window – slams his foot on the accelerator and speeds along the narrow streets constantly seeking out suspects or trying to be the first at the scene of a crime. I, meanwhile, hang onto my seat for dear life and try not to notice the scrapes and near misses as we hurtle along. We receive a radio call about shouts and screams coming from an apartment block but find a group of friends watching a horror flick at high volume. What seems like hours pass driving around and around the city streets when a warning about a *chashud* wearing a blue shirt and walking towards the Dolphinarium night club comes in and suddenly all systems are go. “I am in the area” Hadar replies at lightening speed and we are off, lights flashing, sirens blaring. We pull up to the beachside club and take a look around.

Hadar: “Look for a *chashud*”. “Does he look Arab?”

Boaz and Dana: “No”

Hadar: “Who is that over there?” “Does he look Arab?”

Boaz and Dana: “No”.

Two men walk towards a car.

Hadar: “Do they look Arab?”

Everyone: “Yes”.

Hadar gets out and goes to talk to the two men but neither one is our man. After a couple more minutes mooching about we try a few nearby car parks and seedy streets

and suddenly come to a screeching halt. Hadar thinks he has spotted someone lurking in the shadows up an alley, but as he shines his torch the “suspect” turns out to be just some Jewish Israeli guy taking a tipsy toilet break. He finishes, zips his fly and grins at the glaring Hadar, “I was just taking a piss” he says, crudely stating the obvious, “do I look suspicious?!” As much as they may screen “anyone” security staff also search for “Arabs”.

At the security gate specific signs seem to give way to stereotypes, reading off suspicious signals to reading off race. Yet as we have seen perceptions of safe and suspicious persons, legitimate or potentially dangerous presence are far from fixed and may be less susceptible to stereotype than they seem. Such markers of suspicion emerge within and are dependent upon local histories and historical particularities so that signs of danger and the various people they are associated with alter and adapt over time and space. So do guards and selectors have a prototypical image of what or who they are looking for in mind? Adam, Dudi, Smadar, Rachel and many others mentioned the old figure of the 18-25 year old male Arab in a big coat with wires sticking out of his sleeves but rejected its relevance to today’s security climate. Yet, to my amateur security eyes the shadow of stereotype and strangers seemed to haunt their suspect searching practice.

As Heyman (2001) argues, US immigration officers confronted with similar situations along the Mexican borderline often read off bodies, clothing and covert national stereotypes, in particular the humble, hard-working “José Mexican” in order to determine levels of dangerousness and make swift interpretations of the people standing before them. Gilboy (1991) shows how when faced with the need to make on-the-spot decisions about passengers; whether they are who they say they are, whether they pose a threat and whether to let them pass, immigration inspectors at “Metropolitan Port” - a major US airport - scan and sift for “suspicious” persons who are then referred to a secondary inspector for further questioning. Such discretionary decision making she shows, often assesses credibility based upon a number of occupationally constructed cultural “types”, each informed by a combination of prior experience on-the-job and more cultural notions of belonging or

behaviour. Business and tourist travellers from a particular Asian country for instance, are considered completely trustworthy when it comes to immigration matters and so receive relatively little in the way of questions or queries from staff. In contrast the “nanny” type of traveller, usually a young woman without working visas, arriving from specific European states for a summer “visit” with friends of the family who just happen to have small children is instantly flagged as a suspect. Such “stories” fit a familiar and suspicious pattern of people attempting to side-step red-tape regulations, receive short shrift from inspectors and are sent for secondary screening without further ado (Gilboy 1991).

In a similar sense Norris and Armstrong bring to light the selective activities of UK CCTV operators (Norris and Armstrong 1999). According to their CCTV studies if you are young, male and black you are more likely to be the focus of closed-circuit cameras than other people on the street (Norris and Armstrong 1999). Yet these selective suspicions cannot be directly attributed to any “objective” surveillance techniques or standardised criteria employed by camera operators but rather the cumulative effects of cultural attitudes, racial prejudice and previous experience (Norris and Armstrong 1999, Lyon 2007).

Working with security officers at various public and private sites Button (2007), McCahill (2002) and Wakefield (2003) all note a tendency for security staff to take an interest in particular groups or types considered suspicious or risky. Groups of youths from a nearby estate often came into Button’s shopping and leisure centre in order to make trouble. As a result security staff working at “Pleasure Southquay” were far more likely to keep a close eye on any groups of young men roaming the corridors (Button 2007: 167). In a context of violent conflict Longman (2001) describes how during the Rwandan genocide in the mid-1990s people often did not trust identity cards as a means to accurately distinguish Hutu and Tutsi citizens, trying instead to research the histories of those they suspected of having Tutsi blood, or else relied on stereotypical and phenotypical markers of difference. In the UK following the 7/7 bombings in London for example, any underground passengers carrying heavy-looking backpacks automatically aroused the suspicions of city

commuters (Kelly 2008). Radical Islamic practice and its foreign practitioners were increasingly viewed as a dangerous influence and a sizeable portion of the British-born Muslim population found themselves placed under increased surveillance and public scrutiny.

Of course as security staff standing outside Tel Aviv stations, cinemas and shopping malls were quick to point out, any security system based upon selective stereotype would be foolish to do so as it would only provide new opportunities to pass as undetected or unthreatening. Any enemy or potential attacker would surely spot an established stereotype and alter their tactics accordingly. So friend and foe can only problematically be mapped onto cultural stereotype. Which is why for most security staff a vague idea of “Arab” looks, the large coat in summer clime or protruding wires tip-off are so very problematic and even passé. Whereas groups employing suicide terror tactics against Israeli targets initially recruited young men ready and willing to become a martyr for the cause, once security checks were put in place and began picking out young men as suspects they invariably changed tack, sending women and even bombers disguised as religious Jews to carry out each deadly mission.

So while Israeli security staff may not deal with strict or systematic stereotypes as such, there is still a sense – as we saw with the *SHaBa*”*CH* spotting - in which people think there is a discernable difference between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Arab populations. Danger is associated with difference. These suspicious separations and cultural perceptions of danger stem not only from the specific fears about suicide bombers but like Gilboy’s (1991) immigration inspectors, from past experiences, local histories, conflicts and cultural concepts of difference. Reading danger off bodies is, I suggest, bound up with broader fears surrounding democratic and demographic threats to the Jewish character of the Israeli state and the safety of the Jewish people.

Demography and Danger

During my time in Israel/Palestine anxieties about “Israeli Arabs” (Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel), question marks over their allegiance to the state, familial links with “terrorists” in the occupied territories, and rising birth rates were a repeated and regular topic of public and political debate. Israel’s unique status as a “Jewish and Democratic” state with a Jewish demographic majority appeared to be perpetually under perceived threats posed by the potential treachery and speedy expansion of its Arab citizenry. Palestinian Arab citizens were often presented as the unknown or unreliable strangers and enemies within; one of many internal socio-political problems or threats from a growing poverty gap to religious-secular strife, that tend to take a back seat to national level security concerns and hostilities with the Palestinians. Ideas and anxieties abounded in political speeches and press column inches about encouraging “population transfer”¹⁵, increasing “ethnic homogeneity” (Arad 2005), Jewish Israeli emigration (Sa’ar 2005) and seditious “fifth columns” (Gordon 2007, Kopty 2007, Nahmias 2006).

Such concepts are nothing new; several variations on a demographic theme have long circulated within popular and political debate, in particular after the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa* intifada in the occupied territories in September 2000 and the killing of 13 Palestinian Arab protestors by Israeli police the following month. At such times doubts about the status and loyalty of Palestinian populations living within the state of Israel swiftly come to the fore. In 2003 Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s then treasurer and former Prime Minister, famously coined the term “demographic bomb” to convey his conviction that any rise in Palestinian Arab numbers above current levels of roughly 20% would place the safety of the state’s Jewish majority in serious jeopardy (Sedan, Ha’aretz 18.08.2003). And in 2004, Benny Morris, one of Israel’s preeminent “new historians” and a scholar credited with sparking a critical review of Zionist history during the late 1980s and 1990s took an abrupt turn-around, outlining his own demographic misgivings, “The Israeli Arabs are a time bomb. Their slide into complete Palestinization has made them an emissary of the enemy that is among

¹⁵ Various versions of a population exchange plan were popularized by politicians Efraim Sneh (2002, Labour) and Avigdor Lieberman (2004, Yisrael Beiteinu).

us. They are a potential fifth column. In both demographic and security terms they are liable to undermine the state” (Shavit, Ha’aretz 01.09.2004).¹⁶ For Morris and Netanyahu alike, Israel’s Palestinian Arab citizenry poses both a pernicious internal security threat and a danger to the very Jewish foundations of the state. Danger and demography intertwine in the suspicious suppositions of a Jewish Israeli public.¹⁷

Two high-profile stories from my time in the field neatly illustrate some of the major demographic issues. Here, concern coalesces not around the specific suspect coming from outside the state, as with the idea of the *chashud* for example, but around Israel’s internal “Arab” populations. The first story comes during Israel’s 2006 general elections when Russian born politician Avigdor Lieberman’s self-styled “Lieberman Plan” – first floated in 2004 – re-emerged with renewed vigour. The “plan” advocates the transfer of “Israeli Arab” populations close to the border with the West Bank in exchange for major Jewish settlement blocks inside the occupied territories. In other words, Lieberman’s plan promotes redrawing the demographic map through the aggressive manipulation of ethnic and racial geography. “If we want to safeguard Israel’s character as a Jewish Zionist state there is no other solution” Lieberman told Israel Army radio (haaretz.com 01.11.2006). Earlier comments made to a newspaper journalist reveal his exclusivist and ethnocentric sensibilities: “When I see Arabs going to blow themselves up in Haifa or Nahariyya, or Arabs who donate to terrorists’ families – if it depended on me, they wouldn’t have stayed here one minute, they and their families” (Galilee, ha’aretz.com 19.04.2002). Palestinian Arabs are perceived and presented as the explicit enemy within, suspicious citizens who do not belong.

In the midst of such debate the Israel Democracy Institute’s 2006 surveys polled 62% of Israelis in favour of encouraging “Arab emigration” (Sela 2006). With his party *Yisrael Beiteinu* (Israel is our Home) garnering a substantial portion of electoral

¹⁶ While prominent “new historians” such as Benny Morris did not challenge the ideological premises of Zionism they did acknowledge and draw attention to Jewish complicity and culpability in and for the Palestinian *nakba* (the “catastrophe”) resulting from the displacement of the Palestinian population during the 1948 war.

¹⁷ My intention here is not to generalise – there are many Jewish Israelis who are against such sentiments – but to point out common and majority streams of thought and opinion in the Israeli public sphere.

support, Lieberman soon found himself in a pivotal political position.¹⁸ When *Kadima* won with a marginal majority *Yisrael Beiteinu* quickly benefited from the exigencies of proportional representation becoming a key component in Ehud Olmert's governing coalition, and propelling Lieberman into the post of Minister for Strategic Threats.

Secondly, in 2006 Israel's High Court rejected legal appeals against 2003 amendments to the Nationality and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order), a suspension which prohibits Israeli residency or citizenship for Palestinians from the occupied territories who marry an Israeli citizen. Cloaked in the language of "national security", the verdict was widely perceived as a purely demographic decision aimed at curbing "Arab Israeli" population growth.¹⁹ What was at stake was not national security per se but the security and superiority of Israel's Jewish majority. "The state has stabbed its Arab citizens in the back" *United Arab List* Member of Knesset (MK) Ahmad Tibi announced (Marciano, ynetnews.com 2006). "This morning the High Court understood Israeli democracy's need to defend itself. This is a victory to those who believe in Israel as a Jewish state" countered Yoel Hasson, MK for ruling party *Kadima* (Marciano, ynetnews.com 2006). His comments echo the Attorney General's cry "democracy has to defend itself" in his charges against Palestinian Arab MK Azmi Bishara's "a state for all its citizens" campaign back in 2002.²⁰ And so democracy and demography become inextricably entwined. Within such discourse Jewish and democratic become mutually reinforcing, fostering the idea that the democratic state must be a Jewish state and vice versa, a lop-sided logic in which a state supposed to guarantee the liberty and self-determination of the Jewish people "can only be a democratic state" (Ezrahi and Kremitzer 2001: 17-19).

¹⁸ *Yisrael Beiteinu* was formed in 1999 by Lieberman and presents a platform for Russian immigrants to Israel (who form the bedrock of its support base), running on a firmly rightwing ticket, taking a hard line on all negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, supporting increased Jewish immigration and Palestinian Arab emigration.

¹⁹ The vast majority of such unions are between Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinians from the occupied territories.

²⁰ Paradoxically Bishara sought to promote universal and equal citizenship status for all citizens of Israel.

While hard-line proposals like the High Court decision and the “Lieberman Plan” were met with approbation in many quarters including some members of the press (for example Bar’el, www.haaretz.com 2006) and politics (Labour MK Pines-Paz resigned in protest to Lieberman’s appointment), as well as many of my Tel Aviv friends and informants, these demographic arguments do voice genuine and deep seated concerns about the physical, geographical, cultural and demographic safety of the Jewish people and the Jewish state. Beware “discrimination” and “demographic hysteria” cautioned Shuli Dichter (co-director of the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel) in his *Yedioth* column (ynetnews.com 2006), while simultaneously reassuring readers of a substantial Jewish majority for generations to come. A strong attachment to the idea and materiality of a Jewish State of Israel remains.

However, apprehensions about Arabs is no simple majority/minority demographic dilemma or fear but springs from the very Jewish foundations of the Israeli state. And here it is useful to outline some of these wider worries over an unsettled state spatiality – a blurring at the borders of the state and the boundaries of the social – that fuel the pre-occupation with Israeli demographics and Arab populations. Such territorial and demographic concerns have their roots within the historical context of Zionism as a movement motivated by Jewish self-determination and collective survival (Elon 1971, Morris 1999, Segev 1986, Yiftachel 2006). Jewish settlement in their mythical ancestral homeland, the perception of this land as a safe haven and source of liberation after generations of persecution in Europe, the Holocaust at the hands of the Nazis, and ongoing Arab aggression against the nascent Israeli state became the narrative and emotional cornerstones of Zionist nation-building (Ram 1996, Yuval-Davis 2003, Yiftachel 2006, Zerubavel 2002). This is not the place to engage with historical debate in depth (see introduction), but it is worth keeping in mind these collective narratives of nationhood, the various Arab-Israeli wars, the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict and continuing occupation of Palestinian territories - pulling out some salient points that have helped shape Israel’s Jewish-democratic-demographic axiom and associated anxieties about “Arab” citizens.

Following the 1948 war Israel was formally established as a democracy complete with a parliamentary system and territorial citizenship open to all individuals within the boundaries of the 1949 armistice agreement (known as the Green Line). The Declaration of Independence proclaimed an Israel that “will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction” (cited in Handelman 2004: 44). Yet as Shafir (1989) and Yiftachel (2006) note, there is an implicit and important discrepancy between this universalist inclusive aspiration and the desire to begin building an exclusively Jewish kind of nation-state (Shafir 1989, Shafir and Peled 2002). Zionist territory was also to be “pure” in the sense that *Eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel, or Jewish Homeland) was conceived as *terra nullis*; an empty land ready for a uniquely Jewish redemption, “the birthplace of the Jewish people” to the exclusion of pre-existing indigenous Palestinian and Bedouin populations (Declaration of Independence in Handelman 2004: 61). In this sense Yuval-Davis (2003: 183) describes Jewish nationalism as Janus-faced; liberating persecuted Jews from around the world on the one hand and oppressing native populations on the other.²¹

Israel was to be a democracy for the Jewish people and the Jewish people alone, “Israel defines itself as a state of and for Jews, that is, the homeland of the Jews only” (Smootha 1998: 205). Handelman notes how notions of nationality shape a taxonomy of differentiation between Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens. The categories of “minority” (*mi’out*) and “community” or “ethnicity” (*eda*) in popular culture refer to non-Jewish citizens and Jews respectively. So that non-Jewish (mostly Palestinian Arab) “nationalities” become subordinate “minorities” and only Jewish “ethnicities” may become cohesive national communities, subcategories of the Jewish Israeli nation (*le’om*) (Handelman 2004: 43-44). Demography and “democracy”, Jewishness and belonging to the state were linked from the start. In 1964 the Israeli High Court decided on the Yedor Case, declaring “the Jewishness of Israel” a constitutional reality (Lahav 1997, Yiftachel 2006). And, in 1992 two Basic Laws formally enshrined the binary “Jewish and Democratic” character of the Israeli state.

²¹ Whilst Tom Nairn (1977) makes this observation about nationalism in general, Yuval-Davis presents Israel as a particularly extreme example.

While the kinds of identity documents discussed earlier now leave the nationality section of an ID card as blank, cards issued prior to April 2002 list Jewish Israelis as “Jewish” and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel according to national-ethnic or religious identity. “Israeli” crucially appears only in relation to an individual’s citizenship status (UNCHA 2003).

In practice, Oren Yiftachel argues that “Jewish and Democratic” translates into a powerful and ongoing project of “Judaization” – demographically, politically, geographically, symbolically and culturally expanding the Jewishness of the state (Yiftachel 2006). The legal linchpin of the project – amongst other policies and practices which seek to cement the Jewish character of the state – lies in a Jewish Law of Return and parallel denial of return for Palestinian refugees.²² Any Jew from anywhere in the world may become a citizen; indeed Israel actively encourages Jewish immigration whilst imposing strict controls on the entry and naturalization of other ethnic communities (al-Haj 2002, Ghanem 2000, Kimmerling 2001, Yiftachel 2006). Indeed I was often told “this is your home too” by members of my extended Israeli family and acquaintances in my neighbourhood. As a British Jew Israel was perceived as my true place on the planet and my final days in Tel Aviv were coloured by comments about when I would return to Israel along with questions of why I should want to leave in the first place. The expansion of these immigration laws in 1970 to include people with only one Jewish grandparent stretched the ethnic kinship link and encouraged an influx of non-Jews, mainly from the Soviet Union after 1989. Jewish Diasporas thus expand and blur the edges of the already fuzzy sovereign state.

The occupation and subsequent settlement of Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem after victory in the 1967 Six Day War, has further blurred and shifted the boundaries of the State of Israel, actively incorporating Jewish settlers into the electoral process while keeping their Palestinian counterparts - directly or indirectly

²² Palestinians who either fled or were forced out by Jewish forces during the 1948 war have no right to return to take up residence on their former land and properties in Israel. The issue continues to be central to any possible peace negotiations.

controlled by Israeli policy - firmly disenfranchised. Moreover the Occupation and continuing process of Judaization have thrown the physical-geographical boundaries of the state into serious disarray. The borders of the Israeli state are neither set nor stable but are blurred by the continuing conflict and constant building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Indeed, Baruch Kimmerling has suggested that Israel possesses frontiers as opposed to clearly marked and legally defined borders (Kimmerling 1983).

Disputes over the precise delineations of Israeli territory have dogged the state since its declaration in 1948. International recognition has ranged from the boundaries set out in the 1947 UN partition to the armistice lines agreed and altered in 1948, 1967 and 1973. And internally border disputes vary just as widely from the “Greater Israel” aspirations of the settlement movement *Gush Emunim* which views Israeli territory as including the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai Peninsula and even parts of southern Lebanon (Lustick 1988, Sprinzak 1988), to leftwing (sections of Labour and parties on the Zionist left) limits based around Israel’s pre-1967 borders (Beilin 1999). Leading party *Kadima* seemed content to limit Israel’s territorial claims to incorporating major settlement blocks within the West Bank - a complex division with grave implications for a potential contiguous Palestinian state. In the absence of clear territorial boundaries borders and populations are even more porous. Such blurred borderlines produce profound uncertainties about the stability and definition of the sovereign state as well as the safety of the Jewish population, unsettle demographic senses and cloud the parameters of the Israeli polity, questioning precisely who belongs.

Nevertheless Jewish Israeli public opinion remains profoundly committed to the “Jewish and Democratic” character of the state. According to Ghanem (2003), Lustick (1980), and Yiftachel (2006) the vast majority of opinion all the way from the right to the leftwing poles of the Israeli political map, lies within a general consensus that Israel is a Jewish state supporting Jewish citizens. A whole host of annual surveys attempt to trace, quantify and keep tabs on the public mood; testament to the troubling energies and anxieties around issues of belonging,

demography and danger. October 2007 Peace Index figures show that when asked to pick between maintaining the Jewish character of the state and maintaining its democratic character, 48% of the Jewish public prefer the second and 34% the first (14.5% see them as equally important and the rest do not know) (Yaar and Hermann 2007). The importance of democracy may dominate but Jewishness remains a high priority. According to the Israeli Institute for Democracy polls 87% of all Israeli participants (including Jews and Palestinian Arab citizens) believe relationships between Jews and Arabs are not good or not good at all, framing it as the deepest divide within Israeli society (Arian et al 2007). In 2006, following the war in Lebanon against Hizbullah a substantial portion of the Jewish public perceived Arabs as a hostile minority with 68% believing “Arab Israelis” capable of initiating an *intifada* whilst 64% feared Arabs endanger the security of the state due to their relatively high birth rates. A non-Jewish majority would make a Jewish-centred state untenable. 72.6% of the Jewish participants felt the majority of “Arabs” are more loyal to the idea of a Palestinian state than the existing State of Israel in which they live (Smootha 2006).

As a result Oren Yiftachel finds the “Jewish and Democratic” hybrid highly questionable. Pointing to the pervasive privileging of *ethnos* (membership determined by common origin) over *demos* (inclusive membership within a given territory) (Yiftachel 2006) - a contradictory coupling which Smadar Lavie calls the “oxymoronic Jewish Democratic state” (Lavie 2008) – Yiftachel (2006) roots uncertainties and anxieties over the blurring of polity, border and population lines in the biased structure of the Israeli state. Such Jewish demographic and existential anxieties stem in part from the tensions, contradictions and incongruities of Israel’s very “Jewish and Democratic” *raison d’être* (Yiftachel 1998, 1999, 2006; Zakaria 1997). Specific fears about dangerous bodies carrying bombs cannot, I suggest, be separated from more abstract demographic anxieties about pernicious and proliferating “Arab” bodies. It is from this perspective that aspects of security practice in Tel Aviv must be understood. Finding suspects and “fifth columns” come together at the security check.

In this sense all the specific signs which suggest someone suspect come up against broader cultural and demographic notions of danger and risk. And here I would like to reflect back on earlier discussion to do with contemporary predictive and risk driven forms of security-surveillance and social life. Writing about risk, Ulrich Beck (1992) sees modernity as making a break with pre-modern associations of risk with difference or “otherness”. Risk, argues Beck, is now so globalised and “democratic” a perception and phenomena that such risky associations have become redundant. One can no longer presume to protect oneself by associating risk with dangerous “others” who can be avoided or somehow kept at bay (Good 2007: 256). Yet, as Tony Good points out in his discussion of risk and asylum procedures, difference may remain a defining element in perceptions of risk and danger (Good 2007: 256).

For the anthropologist Mary Douglas it is precisely such an ongoing association between risk and “otherness” that links her more recent work on cultures of risk within modern industrialized societies (Douglas 1982, 1992) with her influential ethnographic writings on purity and danger amongst whom, according to Beck’s formulation, would be called “pre-modern” social groups (Good 2007). Douglas describes a continuing human predisposition to project “anxieties and fears about risk” onto strangers or “marginalised” social groups (Good 2007: 256, Lupton 1999: 123-4). As Joanna Bourke argues, as an emotion fear mediates between the individual and the social, or one community and another. By naming our fears and rendering risk and danger visible we simultaneously describe difference, defining who is “within” and who “without”, who is dangerous and who belongs (Bourke 2005). The will to legibility embedded in the security check and its suspicious gaze reproduce the parameters of difference, risk and danger, a disjunction in citizenship whereby Jewish Israelis are perceived as “within”, non-Jews and Palestinians as “without” or in the case of Palestinian Arab citizens as within-without the community of Israel.

The Israeli state has a two-fold approach to these strangers or others in its midst. “Anthropophagy” – “devouring” strangers and “metaphorically transforming them into a tissue indistinguishable from one’s own – to borrow Bauman’s “Making and

unmaking of strangers” terms (1995: 2), is exemplified by the “absorption” of new immigrants (particularly Jews) via linguistic and cultural assimilation programmes, just like the Hebrew language school (*ulpan*) I attended during my first months in the country. In contrast the demographic anxieties, the Occupation, settlement policies and the association of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel with terrorist fighters and “fifth columns” appear analogous with Bauman’s notion of “anthropoemy”: “vomiting” out strangers and “banishing them from the limits of the orderly world” (Bauman 1995: 2). These are the suspicious yet familiar strangers, the insider-outsiders cast out of the community of belonging. But critically such concepts assume a neat and clear division between self and stranger, who belongs and who does not.

The neat and tidy idea of difference, a logic of discrete demographics and national self-determination between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian has also been formally established in the two-state solution and legacy of the 1993 Oslo accords, repeated attempts under the Rabin, Barak and Sharon governments to re-partition Palestine, and many subsequent conflict resolution scenarios. Discourses expressing difference and underlining the need to reshape Israel’s borders along ethnic lines have also been granted growing popular credence over the years from leading Israeli academics and public figures such as geographer Arnon Soffer (2001), law professor Ruth Gavison (2001), and writer Amos Oz (2002). Both Lisa Hajjar (1995: 57) and Oren Yiftachel (2006: 8, 97) argue that many academic and scholarly studies of Israel/Palestine have also worked within and therefore helped to reproduce and reinforce the nationalist territorial and political narratives of the conflict, shaping Israel and the Palestinians as two discrete populations. Tobias Kelly (2003) argues that many academic studies of the region have simply worked with the categories produced by the conflict rather than critically questioned them. This is akin to what Jonathan Spencer has called the phenomena of anthropologists “writing within” when it comes to nationalism studies (Spencer 1990). Studies have thus largely tended to treat nationalist narratives as reality, exploring Israeli and Palestinian identities and societies in isolation from one another (for example Khalidi 1997, Jean-Klein 2001, Swedenburg 1995), concentrating on either one or another society (for example Cohen 1965, Eisenstadt

1967), or looking at both societies but still treating them as distinct social groups (for example Smootha 1978, Weingrod 1985, Lustick 1980). Such studies have been in danger of reifying and reproducing existing categories, presuming that Israel and Palestine exist as two distinct social, territorial and political entities. In this context Hajjar argues that these socio-political distinctions are often written in terms of concrete binary differences such as settler/indigenous or democratic/terrorist – or in the context of this discussion as safe/suspicious (Hajjar 1995: 64).

Yet as the uncertainties of the security check show us citizens, stereotypes and strangers, self and other, safe and dangerous are neither set nor stable. In contrast to these rather dualistic conceptions and despite security staff's apparent attempts to distinguish between bodies and populations it is not so easy to determine difference. More recent studies have attempted to unsettle such unquestioning and dichotomous approaches (for example Bornstein 2002, Shafir 1989, Kimmerling 1983, Kelly 2003). The difficulty for security staff is that the other is not so other and the stranger is not so strange. The corporeal calculations of security staff may attempt to differentiate difference and to read danger off the bodies before them, but those bodies are also somewhat familiar and rather hard to read. Common sense and common fears turn out to be rather close and intimately connected.

Intimate relations

All the intuitive ways of telling, the corporeal clues, the reading difference off Maussian-type techniques of the body - culturally acquired ways of using and being in the body, walking, talking and moving (Mauss [1935] 1973) - “cannot be taught”, Ronit relates as we chat at her security gate one day, pausing mid-selection, lips pursed, hands on hips, but are part and parcel of Palestinian and Israeli closeness, “growing up together”, or “cousins” as Adam would say, invoking kith and kin, and somehow innately or intimately known.

And as we have seen, Palestinians and Jewish Israelis are intimate. About 20% of the Israeli population are Palestinian Arabs, dominating particular parts of the country,

especially in the Galil to the north and Wadi Ara areas along the Green Line. Palestinians are everywhere, from distinctly Arab towns such as Tayibe to a mixed city like Haifa, or congregate on the southern Tel Aviv beaches towards the adjacent Arab town of Jaffa. Moreover, many Jewish Israelis are Middle Eastern Jews or *Mizrachim*, descended from the Jewish populations of surrounding Middle Eastern states and as a result are culturally close to their Arab neighbours, or, like my flatmate's mother, our elderly landlady or Dudi the security guard, speak fluent Arabic. Arabic words have also long played a central role in popular Hebrew slang and many West Bank Palestinians who once worked within the Israeli economy speak Hebrew, have the same hairstyles and follow the same fads and fashions as their Israeli counterparts, in ways which make them intricately and intimately indistinguishable. Not to mention the masses of new (mostly Jewish) immigrants and foreign workers from as far afield as France and the Philippines, busily "absorbing" and assimilating to Israeli styles and standards. As Oren Yiftachel argues, most events, processes and peoples in Israel/Palestine have been and continue to be intimately interlinked, resembling what Portugali calls "implicate relations" developing through continuous interaction and interdependence, becoming inextricably "enveloped" entities (Portugali 1993, Yiftachel 2006: 8). It is from this perspective that security practices in Tel Aviv must be understood.

All this talk of the out of place other, the "strange" or "not normal" person begs the question what or who is in place, who fits and who belongs? For Virginia Dominguez, as for security staff, when it comes to what she terms Israeli "peoplehood" such ideas of strangers, self and other, belonging or being out of place are neither explicit nor set in stone as there are "uncertainties and indeterminacy at the boundaries of the collective self, and hence otherness" (1989: 174). There is no easy oppositional dualism here, no obvious stranger, and no simple signs of suspicion. We cannot as we find with the *SHaBa*"CH and the suspect, and as Dominguez herself discovers "assume too neat and clear-cut a separation between self (Israeli and Jewish) and other (epitomised by, but not restricted to, Arabs)" (1989: 160). The suspect is never quite other or out of place, but is similar and almost the same, uncanny in his or her strange familiarity. This is why the "*Rosh*

Ha'ir" attacker with whom we began part two, a Palestinian disguised as a pedlar, merged and mingled so easily with people surrounding the station in Tel Aviv; the southern neighbourhoods which are home to a mixture of *Mizrachim*, Russian and Ethiopian immigrants and foreign workers. The bomber blended into the crowd because he looked familiar or "just like us" as the *Mizrachi* restaurant owner said himself. There is no easily differentiation between populations; danger skirts instead around the *unheimlich* and *unfamiliar*. Who then is "the odd person out" Rachel says as she stares at her "far away mountain", focussing on a building some way across the street and carefully filtering everyone else within her field of vision? Who looks "not normal" or "nervous" to Adam as he scans the station streets? Who "has a suspicious face" as Moti says below, taking the *Mishmar ezrachi* wheel to patrol the city at night?

In such contexts it is difficult to read or tell an Israeli citizen who needs to be protected from a Palestinian threat. Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Arab communities may or may not interact but they are intimately entwined. As such, bodies present a very confusing canvas off which to read potential danger (Kelly 2008). Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs are simply too intimately indistinguishable, too implicated socially, culturally, geographically, physically and politically to differentiate and divide, despite the best attempts of security staff to do so.

One civil guard shift, as we patrol the city streets in our clapped out police van in the small hours of the morning, Moti at the wheel and Ben keeping a beady watch up front, suspicion seems to be everywhere. Moti, an orthodox Jew and officer in the Army, his curly side-locks tucked up and under his police cap pulls up to the kerb at every opportunity trying to get a good look at some unsuspecting citizen or other. "Why?" "What do you want?" "You see something about his face?" yells Ben, annoyed at every over-zealous snoop, slow-down or stop. We chase "strange looking" cyclists, and men with "funny looking" faces, stop a car load of youths from Lod (a mixed Jewish-Palestinian Arab city south-east of Tel Aviv), book a female drunk driver with an expired driving licence and bicker incessantly over who is and who is not "*chashud*". After hours and hours and several caffeine stops, the

pernickety pair agree on a man in his thirties loitering by the side of a deserted street. “He has a suspicious face” says Moti and we drive on over to investigate. “Good evening. What are you doing?” begins Moti, winding down and leaning out of the window, but before the suspect can do more than smile both he and Moti are interrupted by loud shouts from a man and two women dashing across the road to join us. “He’s waiting for us!” exclaims the older woman catching her breath and stroking his arm, “he’s family”. She laughs, “You know he is always stopped because of his face. It happens all the time, believe me. And you know, his brother is in the police!” They are, I notice now, all dark-skinned *Mizrachim* and I begin to have my own suspicions about just who is “suspicious”.

“What can I do he has a suspicious face!” Moti says, defending his decision as we drive away. “He was stood here, alone, and I saw that group of people on the other side. It was possible that he was waiting for them, but if not then what was he doing standing there in the street?!” Indeed, *Mizrachi* friends were sometimes stopped for an extra moment at security checks or asked to show ID while the *selector* scanned their body and searched their bag. One friend found, much to his amusement, that he aroused security interest as soon as he grew a goatee; a fitting form of facial hair for his up and coming rock band but in a country where beards are more ordinarily associated with orthodox Jews or Palestinian men his own beard became a hairy mark of suspicion, a classificatory sign of difference and danger.

In fact such strange and slippery uncertainties about who looks safe or suspicious, intimate relations and the difficulties of reading danger and difference may only sharpen anxieties and increase illegibility as faith in the truth of the body fails. Faced with the seeming indistinguishability of individual persons security-surveillance emerges as a kind of suspicious social sorting, slipping and sliding between abstract bodies and particular bodies, stereotypes and specifics. Some bodies and some people are always more suspicious than others.

As we have seen, as a method of security-surveillance and a tool towards legibility documents do not work. Documents, I have argued, are unstable and uncertain,

unable to make a person visible or tell security staff who poses a threat. A paper or permit or an ID is not a bomb; it is a bomb-carrying body which may be dangerous.

Yet reading danger off real bodies also brings its own uncertainties as security staff try to tell between populations. Despite myriad specific signs of suspicion and more general notions of difference, demographics and demeanour, finding suspects does not easily map onto more cultural concepts of danger. When a potential suicide bomber could be “anyone” and when populations are too intimately indistinguishable, such phenotypical and stereotypical physical markers can only fail to succeed. The result is even more suspicion; rather than render danger legible or bringing threats out into the open, security-surveillance practices reproduce the opacity and obscurity of the body, resulting in even more suspicion as security staff strive to spot a suspect before it is too late.

In such an uncertain context it seems it is not the person but the category which is key. One does not enter a security check as an individual person but as a member of various categories of belonging and danger. Despite the indistinguishable uncertainties security staff look beyond particular bodies and inscrutable suspects and resort to reading between the uncertain lines of difference and danger, behaviour and belonging. So that Adam may be friendly with individual taxi drivers from Ramle for example, but - along with Dudi, Ronit and Barak - looks for “Arab body language” or physical features when it comes to reading danger. Dan Rabinowitz’s (1997) ethnography of Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arab citizens living in Natzerat Illit (Upper Nazareth), an Israeli new town built on confiscated Palestinian land in 1957 in the hills adjacent to the large Palestinian Arab town of Nazareth, is centred around the relationships between individuals and collectives. His ethnography draws out the nuanced relations between individual citizens such as the respectful Jewish-Israeli patients of a Palestinian doctor, the sharing of seats on the local council with a Palestinian or taking orders from a Palestinian basketball coach. However, this peaceful individual interaction is “but a small part of the picture. There is no place in Natzerat Illit for a Palestinian collective” (Rabinowitz 1997: 184). Individual acquaintances and interactions are known and negotiated whereas collectivities are

unknown, uncertain and suspicious. As Julia Eckert argues, when a potential enemy is unknown one is forced to take preventative steps that prompt the categorization of whole populations (Eckert 2008, Kelly 2008). In this context of security guards and gates it seems “anyone” is often superseded by “Arab” suspicions.

Thus the kinds of classificatory manoeuvres often associated with state of the art computerized monitoring and actuarial surveillance systems and so neatly captured by Roger Clarke’s neologism “dataveillance” (1988) also take place in decidedly non-computerized contexts; by security staff trying to read off increasingly illegible bodies. Just as computerized surveillance systems sort citizens into risky categories according to banks of personal or biometric data, so security staff engage in “social sorting” (Lyon 2003) of the bodies they surveil in efforts to sift out potentially dangerous persons. The very language of *bitachon* conveys this classificatory drive as *selectorim* (selectors) try to select potential threats and pick suspicious categories of persons from the crowd.

As with attempts to read off bodies and between populations, ideas about difference take the form of “bodily diacritics”; corporeal classifications that feed the desire to render threatening bodies and people legible (Aretxaga 2003: 404). Bodily sorts attempt to separate out the safe from the suspect, “Arabs” from “anyone”, the deviant from the dangerous. Such categories of suspicion shape a corporeal cartography of danger, subverting the presumption of innocence and making particular – Palestinian Arab – categories of people prove their innocence.

If security-surveillance is constructed as an effect of particular classificatory practices, it is an embodied and sensual effect, as security staff continue to search for suspicious signs and dangerous signals in categories of bodily operations and physical behaviours. It depends on the continuous sorting of cultural categories and specific concepts of difference and danger. Yet, as I have argued these intense practices of legibility often come up against more *illegibility* as populations are indistinct and as people manipulate known stereotypes. Such as the Belfast women Aretxaga (1997: 66-67) describes, who played with the popular image of women

smuggling IRA weapons beneath their coats. While some women refused to undo their overcoats and expose themselves to the soldiers' gaze others could also open their coats and pass the spot-checks unsuspected, all the time hiding weapons in their prams. Or the women Fanon (1967) describes during the Algerian war of liberation who manipulated the veil in order to carry arms undetected while the French army focused on veiled women as the object of terrorist threat. Women could wear or remove the veil at will in order to blend in or stand out in different parts of town, attract or divert the gaze of French forces, playing with colonial stereotypes for their own gain. Or perhaps the Palestinian attacker who avoids the Arab, male, thick coat stereotype to pose as an orthodox Jew, or passes because she is a woman. Or even the Palestinian suicide bomber who plays with the indistinguishableness of populations, who looks so similar to all the Israelis around him that he can pass through Israel to Tel Aviv, enter the "*Rosh Ha'ir*" shawarma restaurant and blow himself up. So security staff may surveil the social scene, open bags and search bodies and see everything and yet see nothing at all.

As suspicions come up against complicated kinds of intimacy and indistinguishability the boundaries between bodies conceived of as safe self and dangerous other become blurred. What then if such indeterminacy and uncertainty may produces general predictive categories of suspicion? Some people, some usually "Arab" people are always more suspicious than others, but as we have seen "Arabs" – Jewish and Palestinian – are everywhere. If security staff are dealing in uncertain and unstable categories of danger are we not simply seeing a classificatory case in which the kinds of social sorts security staff engage in are more roughly equivalent to racial profiling? Does Palestinian or Palestinian Arab automatically equal danger? And what does this mean in a situation in which the patency of the body is called into question, where it is often impossible to tell Jewish Israeli from Palestinian Arab? As I have argued the assumption that one is safe and the other suspicious is both impractical and impossible. Is *bitachon* simply a rather blunt and uncertain form of Jewish domination and racial discrimination all in the name of preventing danger? It is to questions of racial categories and profiling that we now turn.

Racial profiling, ethno-nationalism and the margins of the state

Racial profiling - the systematic use of predominantly racial or ethnic features in determining whether a person poses a particular (usually criminal) threat - classifies populations on the basis of contestable physical characteristics, membership of a particular ethnic group and behavioural categories (Gandy 2006). It is predictive risk management according to race - itself an uncertain and controversial concept - associated with routine policing and crime prevention in the US (Kennedy 2001, Risse and Zeckhauser 2004). Oscar Gandy (2006) also notes the spread of profiling applications into other domains such as insurance calculation (Squires 2003) and health care provision (Lilliquist and Sullivan 2004). Indeed Israel is no stranger to the charge of racial profiling when it comes to pre-emptive security practices, classifying who does and who does not present a possible threat to the country and its citizens. In fact, the Behavioural Pattern Recognition (BPR) system used by Ben-Gurion airport security staff and much lauded for its successful record in eliminating aircraft related terror attacks, has always relied on predictive racial profiling aimed at singling out Palestinians and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Before having their luggage screened and checking in, passengers are asked a string of questions by a member of airport security staff designed to reveal critical aspects of background, behaviour and risk.

In the Ha'aretz weekend magazine Palestinian Arab writer Sayed Kashua brings his own humorous and serious BPR experience at the hands of El Al (Israel's international airline) security staff to life. After revealing that he lives in Jerusalem Sayed finds himself pulled from the security line at Paris airport, his body scanned with a *magrometer* wand and waits for hours whilst staff search his bag, "Just don't let it be a bomb. If they find a bomb, I'm done for" he mutters to himself (Kashua 2006). Allowed into the smoking area as long as he has a security escort Sayed accepts a cigarette from his security guard chaperone and soon realises he is the suspicious centre of attention, "I have no problem with security checks but I do have

a problem with people looking at me here like I'm a leper; as if I'm really someone dangerous" (Kashua 2006). To pass the time he sits with his security guard, has a few pre-flight drinks and gets chatting about life, family, movies and ambitions. And "at some point" he writes, "it stopped looking like a female security guard escorting a suspect Arab" (Kashua 2006).

In April 2008 following a string of charges brought by Israeli civil rights campaigners against BPR's racial bias, the Attorney General handed down explicit instructions to Israel Airports Authority "to implement visible equality" between Jews and Arabs at its pre-departure security checks (Blumenkrantz, haaretz.com 2008). While the Association for Civil Rights in Israel's annual 2007 report claimed such racial profiling was pushing the country to "new heights of racism" (Yoal and Khoury haaretz.com 2007), other commentators such as terrorism scholar Ariel Merari proclaimed profiling both effective and expedient in the fight against aircraft attacks: "A bomber on a plane is likely to be Muslim and young, not an elderly Holocaust survivor. We're talking about preventing a lot of casualties, and that justifies inconveniencing a certain ethnic group" (The Associated Press, haaretz.com 20.03.2008). For Merari it is less an instance of "racial profiling" and more a case of "rational discrimination" (Gandy 2006), permissible against perceptions of the common good.

Yet practices at the street level security gates or civil guard patrols are not so crude as racial profiling. As we have seen any such strategy fails in the face of intimate relations and impossible difference. There is no such routine racial categorization, no clear distinction between Jew and Arab perceived as safe self and dangerous other despite staff's sometimes "Arab" associations. In fact, as I have argued, any security system would be foolish to rely on racial stereotype or profile, as it would only open up more opportunity for enemies to manipulate the profiles and pass undetected. Enemies come in many guises, hence Adam's argument there are no criterion or signs as such, a focus on "anyone", specific signs and strange behaviours. Yet if we pay attention to actual security practice this strangeness often seems to equal race, a

SHaBa”*CH* or a suspect (*chashud*) most likely has an “Arab face”, looking for “anybody” often ends up as looking for “Arab” bodies.

However, such security practices are far from a systematic profile and rather more slippery and uncertain. It may not be racial profiling but there is clearly something going on. Instead I suggest that at the security check rather abstract concerns about demographic and cultural concepts of threat rub up against specific and fundamental fears residing in the figure of the suicide bomber. This is a particular fear, it is a fear of the individual body itself, a volatile and violent body; a body strapped with bombs. One may other that process, that risk and that fear in the form of a more abstract “Arab” body, a projection of perceived threats rooted within national, cultural, demographic and existential anxieties. But in actual fact it is a fear of something quite specific; a concrete – albeit uncertain – enemy other.

For Freud, the father of anxiety analysis, “*Anxiety* relates to the condition and ignores the object, whereas in the word *Fear* attention is focussed on the object” (Freud 1952: 103). Yet at the security check there seems no such clear-cut psychoanalytical division of danger. The suspect is neither fixed nor stable, but rather an uncertain and unknown slippery figure, as suspicion slips betwixt and between the abstract and the particular, between “Arab” and “anyone”, anxiety and fear. Danger never quite maps onto one or the other, always oscillating as the abstract and specific slip back and forth and overlap, one moment attending to specific signs, another to senses of bodily and behavioural suspicion, another to an “Arab face”. It is here that we gain a sense of how security staff search and slip from anybody to an Arab body to somebody suspicious. As such security practices are neither so systematic and stable, black nor white a practice as racial profiling would presume. This is why ethnographic evidence can seem ambiguous and confusing, reflecting the ambiguities and uncertainties of security staff trying to read danger onto the anthropological page. Specific fears of suicide bombers blur with more abstract anxieties about “fifth columns”, demographics, dangerous Arabs and the vulnerable Jewish nature of the nation-state.

Such motions back and forth are always tethered to the body – to bodily signs, sights and senses of suspicion. The oscillation constitutes a kind of dialectic that continually describes the tensions and contradictions between a *SHaBa*”*CH* and a legal citizen, between “anyone” and “Arab” suspects, between who is Israeli and who is a threat. And so as I argued when it comes to demographics, security deals not only with the violent potentiality of particular bodies but also with the very boundaries of the body politic, with who is dangerous and who belongs. Ideas about bodies and belonging, risk and uncertainty, danger and bombs are also embodied and embedded in the bodies and activities of security guards surveilling and searching, in the people and potential suspects passing by or through the security check. Yael Navaro-Yashin has argued that a political culture of “fear and unknowing is embodied”, carried within and playing out across the bodies of its citizens (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 181). Her ethnography tells of how the idea of the Turkish state is reproduced and realised in part through the reproduction of the body of national heroes, in soldiers’ farewell rituals and in formalized commemorations for the founder of the modern state (Navaro-Yashin 2002). Meira Weiss describes the reconsolidation of “the body of the nation” through Israeli collective commemoration for the bodies of fallen soldiers (Weiss 2003: 65-87). I argue that at the security check one checks and produces a particular kind of embodied racialized citizenship.

The uncertainties surrounding security, borders of the social and the boundaries of the state are an effect played out not only by the bodies of young soldiers, or the heroic leaders of yesteryear, in the enactment of grand public events, parades and commemoration days (Handelman 1998, 2006; Liebman and Don-Yehiye 1983, Weiss 2002), or the holiday celebrations in kindergartens and schools (Handelman 2004), but by the daily passage of citizens’ bodies as they are checked and move through security gates, as people enter bus or train stations, go to the office, the university or the mall. In the sliding between specific fears about suicide bombers and abstract anxieties about suspicious “Arabs” particular concepts of who is a citizen and who is not, who belongs and who does not, who may be dangerous and who may not, and who is always more suspicious, play out and reproduce a particular kind of uncertain and suspicious citizenship. One which is rooted not in the

universal rhetoric of a Declaration of Independence, a legal construct or normative concept but a reflection of the incommensurability and intimacies of an “ethnocratic” state (Yiftachel 2006). The result is not racial profiling but racialized notions of danger, the segregating proclivities of an ethno-nationalist ethos and how these distinctions are lived out in the everyday.

Oren Yiftachel presents Israel as an ethnocracy, an ethno-nationalist regime structured in order to preserve and promote the “*expansion, ethnicization and control*” of a particular dominant - in this case Jewish - peoplehood (Yiftachel 2006: 11 original emphasis). And in the uncertain slippages of the security check we see the playing out of all the tensions, contradictions and incommensurabilities of ethno-nationalism in which specific dangers to do with particular bodies and suicide bombers rub up against more abstract demographics to do with “Arab” bodies and universal aspirations about egalitarian citizenship for all collide against the essentialist uniqueness of a Jewish state. Distinctions, as demographic discussion suggested, that privilege Jews and mark Palestinians and Palestinian Arabs as both secondary (excluded from the unity of the Jewish national community) and suspicious. While the various Jewish *edot* (ethnic communities) such as the Moroccan *eda*, the Yemenity *eda*, or the Kurdish *eda* are unequivocally part of the Jewish people, “part of the collective self” for whom the State of Israel was formed, Palestinian Arab populations within Israel are others, minorities (*miyutim*) tolerated within Israeli society but not a part of the Jewish people – the prerequisite for belonging to the Israeli nation (*le’om*) (Dominguez 1989: 174, see also Handelman 2004: 43-44). In such classificatory conceptions “Jews should relate organically towards one another within their community-state; while Palestinians are perceived by Jews as the wild, subversive, threatening (irrational, oriental, nomadic, unstable, violent)” other (Handelman 2004: 34). Yet as we have seen suspicions are uncertain, who does and does not belong is never clear.

Thus the slippery and uncertain motion between specific signs and abstract anxiety, between “anyone” and “Arabs”, persons and categories, reflecting ethno-nationalist antinomies of access and denial, axes of belonging and danger as security staff

search for suspects and try to read off bodies and behaviour. So that an Indian man is mistaken for a *SHaBa*”*CH* and another must be a *SHaBa*”*CH* because he “has a face from Ramallah”. So that Adam has Palestinian Arab friends but still looks for “Arab” faces. So that Moti’s man with a “suspicious face” turns out to be a *Mizrachi* Jewish Israeli. So that my extended Israeli family spoke of their lovely “Arab” student lodger, but had strong suspicions about collective Palestinian Arab intentions and loyalties. So that Israeli author David Grossman embarking on a journey to explore Palestinian Arab lives and coexistence in 1993 unexpectedly finds his own suppressed ethno-national anxieties coming to the fore: “And here, something like a nervous security guard began running around inside me, reorganizing the broken ranks. It seems to me that words ‘make room for them’ are what set him off. He is part of me, I’ve encountered him several times in the past month. Right now he demands to know exactly what I meant – just how much room to make for them? And at what expense?...And what does it demand of me, as a Jew in Israel? How much room am I really willing to make for them in the Jewish state?” (Grossman 1993: 20).

As such an uncertain embodied racialized citizenship and sense of belonging emerges in the space between formal notions of citizenship, its everyday application and production within and through the practice of security checks. Security checks as spaces or “margins” where state control continually has to be re-produced and re-invoked (Das and Poole 2004). Spaces where the fundamental claims and assurances of the Jewish ethno-nation become unsettled and revealed in all their uncertain instability. So rather than spaces of “security” as such, security checks emerge instead as spaces of unsettling and suspicion, where specific fears about suicide bombers and “anyone” rub up against racialized notions of danger.

In this context margins are not simply peripheral spaces or borderlines. Margins are not always at the margins. At the Tel Aviv security check questions about individual bodies, boundaries and borders of belonging - the margins - traverse the body of the state and run across the bodies of its citizens. And so margins of uncertainty are also visible and viscerally reproduced at the so-called centre. As Veena Das and Deborah

Poole argue “the question, where are the borders of the state? is fraught with uncertainty and risk, for border-making processes run *within* the political and social territory rather than outside it” (Das and Poole 2004: 17). For the margins, the very blurred and uncertain boundaries and distinctions of the ethno-nationalist state are continually played out, made and remade through these “everyday” security practices.

Concluding remarks

Such practices suggest neither systematic racial profiling nor the empty performance of “security” as Avram Bornstein may argue, but the productive playing out of racialized notions of danger and all the uncertainties of ethno-nationalist citizenship embedded and embodied in the signs and surveillance of the security check. Far from performance it is powerful and productive practice as *bitachon* becomes the playing out and reproduction of belonging; an uncertain and suspicious kind of citizenship.

This chapter has argued that security as the reading of danger off bodies and race practices, produces and plays out a particular kind of uncertain, ethno-nationalist, and suspicious Israeli citizenship. I have discussed how security staff check and what they are checking for, the oscillations between “anyone”, “Arabs” and someone suspicious. But what about all the people passing through? For security is not one-sided surveillance but a social interaction, a risk-filled relation between the checker and the checked. In the following chapter I want to turn to these security relations and explore the ways in which people react to and pass through the security checks. I suggest that it is through this uncertain, suspicious citizenship, through these unstable security interactions that particular citizens are fashioned and formed.

Chapter four: Consenting Citizens?

The security check is not only about the exclusion of suspicious persons or the essentialist effects of belonging; it is also about inclusion in a community of citizens. One is about pushing people away, the other connotes solidarity, pulling together in the face of potential danger, and inclusion in the warmth of the Jewish Israeli fold. This chapter explores the activity of the security check as an intimate engagement between the checker and the checked, eliciting the consent, collusion and critique of citizens who also keep watch, unzip their bags, and open their bodies up for inspection.

In times of crisis Israeli Jews are often spoken of as one great family and the “nation-in-arms” that we will encounter in following chapters. And it is this kinship metaphor twinned with a sense of belonging in overcoming difficult situations, of pulling together or closing ranks, which highlights “the affinities of mutuality” that Israeli Jews are thought to feel despite the many conflicts amongst them (Handelman 2004: 16, see also Shafir and Peled 2002). Yet as this chapter will discuss, such inclusive senses of solidarity are not confined to times of crisis or conflict but play out in the very “everyday” interactions and responses to the security check. This is intimacy in Michael Herzfeld’s (1997: 3) sense of the term, the “assurance of common sociality” and familiarity that emerges in the putting up with the imposition of security checks, in the sense of common responsibility as well as the Israeli “*ma la’asot?!?*” or “what to do?!” resignation and nonchalance, in the slight embarrassment about automatic reactions to the checks and concern in the absence of security staff, in the daily quibbles, critiques and “Do I look like a terrorist?!” grumbles of people as they pass through a check. Reactions and responses that may at one moment reveal the illegibility of security practices and at the next reproduce the legible logic which underlines their necessity and keeps them in place.

Tali and I stand outside gate 5 at the shopping centre, on our way to see a film at the top floor cinema. There are about five people ahead of us, waiting their turn, as a *selector* rummages inside each and every compartment and pocket on each and every

bag, slowly waving a *magnometer* beside each and every back and belly and hip. Bags are asked to be opened, coats unbuttoned and jackets unzipped. “Oh no it is a new one” Tali sighs, propping her sunglasses on top of her head and folding her arms. New ones, new selectors that is, tend to take longer – although the check is still over in a mere matter of seconds – are more meticulous and therefore far more irritating than expert old timers. Behind us people push and rush along the busy shopping street. Car horns honk, kids whizz past on rollerblades and Tali taps her foot in stand-in-line frustration. Tel Aviv is a-whirl with Saturday night activity, everything re-lit and re-opened after the silence of Shabbat as people flock to meet friends and families, visit bars and shops, take a stroll or see a film at the cinema. After a minute my turn comes; step forward, a smile, a “*shalom*”, a wand whisk over stomach, over back, and a wave on into the mall. For Tali, however, security is not so swift and she is held up by her bag. Zip-zip pockets open, hands feel around and eyes peer inside. A few seconds later the bag search is over, Tali snatches up the offending item and stomps inside to join me. “I mean look at me for goodness sake” she says, “Do I look like a terrorist?!”

Street level security in the form of the security gate or check is not so much a state of being as a social interaction, an intimate engagement between the checker and the checked, the surveiller and the surveilled. It is not just about the checking of people but how people engage and react with the check. It is in the fleeting “Do I look like a terrorist?!” relation between a frustrated Tali and the conscientious *selector* checking her bag. It is in the reading off bodies and the two-way physicality of the check that “security” attains an effect, that particular citizenship and citizens are actively re-produced.

Such little incidents and accidents of security frustration are commonplace; the habitual irritations of checking and being checked, the shuffling over to a quicker queue, the frayed tempers and impatient moods that sometimes make the security sparks fly. “Do I look like a terrorist?!” came the most frequent complaint to a bag search or body check. As if to say “What do you want?” “There is nothing suspicious about me”, or “Get back to looking for some real suspects”, calling attention to one’s

own innocence or safety and never really challenging or rebelling against the check's intrusions.

A couple stands in line for instance; shoulders drooped, fiddling in vain with the padlock to their suitcase. The key is nowhere to be found and the check has ground to a halt, abandoned as commuters and shoppers move away in search of a faster moving security flow. A *selector* runs a *magnometer* over the case but it does not beep. "Where are you going?" asks one of the security guards now gathering around the bag. "Rehovot" (a town about 20km south from Tel Aviv) the woman replies as her husband continues to rattle the obstinate lock. For the time being they are going nowhere, stuck at the station security gate. "Look he is a good Israeli man, what do you want from him?" she continues, looking around at no one and everyone and sounding exasperated now. Adam, being the "inspector gadget" of security guards picks a pocket knife from his bulging utility belt and begins poking at the lock, but to no avail. Eventually, after a bit more banging and bashing they call it a day, summoning the security manager for a final opinion before allowing the couple to continue to their bus, dragging their locked luggage behind them.

Tali's "Do I look like a terrorist?!" like the "good Israeli" implies that one is clearly not suspicious, looks Jewish Israeli, is a good Jewish Israeli and is therefore safe not suspicious. They provide an intimate commentary on notions of commonality and danger as well as a kind of "rueful self-recognition" of oneself as engaged in an illegible or uncertain practice and one's own consent or complicity in its exclusive and inclusive effects (Herzfeld 1997: 6). And if Tali does not look like a terrorist then who does? By implication the rhetorical question "Do I look like a terrorist?!" does not simply ask but assumes who does. Their brief protestations act in the same way as security guards' distinctive suppositions, suggesting or implying suspicion lies with other non-Jewish people, consenting or signing up to a particular sense of who belongs, uncertain and racialized divisions of danger, ethno-nationalist senses of belonging to the state and to one another.

The ethics of standing in line

People are not the passive subjects of security-surveillance, they are, as I suggest, active partners in the creation of the security check. Security guards and selectors are not the only ones who scan and search for suspects. People take care, notice if something is amiss or awry, and report suspicious looking persons or objects to nearby security staff. Sometimes someone reported a suspicious object - an abandoned box or bag - and areas would be evacuated and a bomb disposal squad called in. Periodically I would pass a street in town that was temporarily off-limits, cordoned off after a suspicious object sighting. At other times someone thought they had spotted a *chashud*, someone with what looked like wires sticking out of a sleeve or somebody strange.

Guards often find themselves kept on their toes with members of the public quick to point out any lapse in standards or inadequacy in practice, always convinced that they - the security customer - knows best. One afternoon I sprint around the basement floor, trying to keep pace with Natan and his speed-walk patrol, taking me through his territory; past the supermarket, shoe shop alley, indoor clothes market and round and around again until we pass outside and check up on one of the quieter back street security gates. The queue is short, shuffling forward. The *selector* says “hello”, searches a bag, swipes a body and motions people through the doorway. The movements repeat and repeat until one woman stops, shows the *selector* her ID and is ushered on without so much as a bag search or a body swipe, and suddenly all sorts of anger and argument breaks loose. “Why did you not check her bag?” cries the next man in line, scolding the young female *selector* before taking Natan to task. “Why was her bag not checked? You have to check everyone, these days anyone could be Hamas. You have to check the bags, every person. An ID is not a bomb, but a bag could be a bomb!”

Members of the public act as alert “eyes and ears”, informal surveillance and “eyes on the street”. In his discussion of terrorism and urban life in Jerusalem Hank Savitch describes this alert watchfulness as an “animated presence” of shopkeepers,

pedestrians and passengers keeping aware of their surroundings and the people around about (Savitch 2005). After years of attacks on public spaces and commercial places people are still apt to eye one another with care. In so doing people are also their own security guards.

At times, inevitably, the business of opening one's body and belongings to the security gaze became too much. Adam and I hear raised voices and rush to gate 4. Ortal the *selector* is standing there, hair tied back, nail polish glinting, looking tired and creased and really rather angry. She is blocking the path of her pita bread protester; a short middle-aged man wearing a sweatshirt jacket and eating a falafel. "I can't open it" he yells as we arrive, shouting through a mouthful of falafel. "Open your sweater please" Ortal asks, clearly not for the first time, only to be met with more defiant munching. The man is refusing to be checked because he cannot unzip and eat at the same time, brandishing his pita as if it were a security pass or a no-check ticket. But alas, eating does not make one exempt. Ortal rolls her eyes at her opponent as Adam strides over and repeats the request. There is a pause for a moment and a squishy "SLAM" as he smashes his falafel down on the table and unzips the sweater (revealing only a tee shirt). The *magnumeter* swipes back, hips and belly and he marches on into the mall leaving his squashy snack behind.

Yet unlike the "Do I look like a terrorist?!" or "good Israeli" comments which accompany security compliance, any attempt to refuse or kick up a fuss was met with swift approbation. Sometimes, a guard like Benny who worked every day outside the same city centre café would simply say hello to regular customers, or people passing in and out time and time again. Other guards in other places were not always so relaxed. Often people who tried to push on past the line and by-pass the check were people who worked in that particular building and wanted to avoid repeated checks, office workers who pass through several times a day, delivery men who grew tired of stopping in a security line every time they wheel their goods in and out, or someone running late or in a rush. Like the perfume and accessories shop owner at the station mall for example who is bringing in box after box of bottles and reaches the end of his security tether, pushing past Liat, a fairly new and timid *selector*, promising to

give her a whack if she ever tries to check him again. Within minutes he is tracked down by a mob of angry security staff and the security manager is called in to mediate. Guards crowd around his shop, spectators to the heated exchange taking place within. “Some people do not understand the job” says one guard to a nod from his colleague. “We’re not just here to protect those who work here but for everyone...not everyone knows him and not everyone remembers him, the selectors rotate and change, they’re just doing their job. He waits like everyone else. Half a minute.”

And it is not simply the security guards who view such transgressions with a degree of anger and disdain. Telling the story to my friend Tali that night as we caught up with one another and settled down for pizza and a mid-week movie provoked a far stronger reaction than I had anticipated. “Who does he think he is?” she stuttered, “Of course he has to wait and be checked like everyone else. Of course nobody likes to have their privacy invaded, their things gone through, standing in a queue, but we have to, to prevent being blown to bits”. And with that Tali articulated the expectation that everyone, without exception, takes part in security checks. There is a sense in which participation conveys a pragmatic camaraderie, a notion that such checks are an unfortunate necessity and that we’re all in it together. To make a fuss invokes anger and admonishment, one must play one’s part and share in the security burden.

During one of my post-graduate writing-up seminars such discussions sparked similar stories from my peers; Vicky’s experience at military checkpoints in Sri Lanka, Navraj’s erotic checkpoint encounters and negotiations of a very sexual kind of citizenship in India and Daniel’s security shock at a proliferating US security presence. Returning to a post 9/11 United States following field work in Malaysia, Daniel was confronted by radical change. Security in the form of a newly coined Department of Homeland Security, private security companies, airport style screens and security checks were everywhere. Taking foreign visitors to view the Liberty Bell he was surprised by the high levels of security around a previously open and laid back sight-seeing spot. “Liberty” had been replaced by a rash of semi-permanent

human cattle-pens, airport style metal detectors and security staff. Yet nobody else seemed to mind and patiently stood in line, awaiting their turn to be checked. To his horror Daniel found himself taken to one side, patted down, frisked and fumbled in front of his fellow sight-seers. Yet still nobody seemed to mind, heads turned, eyes were averted. The final security straw came with a request to loosen his trousers for a full body search. For Daniel this was one intimate invasion too many, he decided not to submit and offered to leave the site. At this point the previously passive queue suddenly snapped to attention with cries of “We all have to do this”, “This is for our safety” and “Things are not the same as they were” filling the air as he fled the scene. Such sentiments were hardly a minority perspective and Daniel found himself on the receiving end of a similar emotional ticking off from friends and family. He began he said, to feel as though he had made the wrong moral choice by not complying and submitting to the security process, showing solidarity in the face of what was perceived as a dangerous and difficult time along with everyone else. His visitors meanwhile, having passed unimpeded saw the Liberty Bell in all its secure glory and had a jolly old founding fathers time. As I found in Tel Aviv, there is a certain responsibility to security, a certain ethics of standing in line.

Such solidarity conceives and accepts that there is a common fear, a sense of collective responsibility and a situation in which everyone should share. While some avoid busy security checks or gates and seek a short queue or no queue, and some see security checks a superfluous “it does nothing” to the real *bitachon* that takes place in the secretive world of undercover espionage, and others underline its absolute necessity “It’s a must”, all seem to agree on this kind of duty or joint responsibility to reveal one’s body and oneself. In this sense it is a performance of sorts, showing one is a safe or secure citizen, but it is much more than this, entailing consent to a kind of solidarity or common sociality, a securitised citizenship and a fuzzy ethics of standing in line. It is an ordinary form of inclusion and intimacy within the Jewish Israeli fold.

At a shopping mall - it could be a café, a theatre, an office block - on a Friday afternoon, a young man moves forward opening his arms, holding them at shoulder

height as the *selector* moves forward. A bodily surrender. The *magrometer* swings in the small space between their bodies, under the arms, behind the back, belly and legs. The man is on his cell phone and stares straight ahead, continuing his conversation, avoiding all eye contact with his checker. A matter of security seconds, the well rehearsed movements and it is over. “Fine” the *selector* mutters and the man, still engrossed in his conversation, his eyes and attention seemingly somewhere else passes through and disappears behind the double doors.

In consenting to the security check, in the opening and checking of the body lies an unpredictable agreement between the checker and the checked. It is a bodily negotiation of signs and suspicions and physical movements; a corporeal conversation about the terms of citizenship, about what kind of a citizen one is. Both must agree on belonging and an absence of suspicious signs or bodily risk (see also Jeganathan 2004). The exclusion is always present as a potentiality. For in this fleeting encounter and momentary accord the citizen enters and allies him or herself to the uncertain suspicions and ethno-nationalist suppositions of the security check. Others who are not so lucky, where suspicion is not put to rest by the security interaction, find themselves stopped and held for police questioning.

Security Ordinary

This consensual choreography of citizenship between security staff and citizens, bodily movements and suspicions, these margins of uncertainty and moments of violent anticipation become routinised in the permanency and predictability of physical checkpoints. Citizenship is re-configured in these predictable corporeal interactions in which the security check is neither out of the ordinary nor exceptional but regular and routine. The swift moves to put public and private security practices into place in the aftermath of the first and second *intifada* attacks seem long-forgotten, now a “normal” part of life, as most people were apt to respond. Security guards and security practices are all over the streets, re-emerging in quite ordinary activities and artefacts such as child’s play, a TV gimmick, or a humorous magazine

cover. A man interrupted my café table conversation one day as I sat describing recent research adventures to a friend, to tell me his five year old son uses his wife's cell phone as an imaginary *magnometer*, miming the body check on members of the family. On TV one of the top comedy chat shows sports its very own security guard character who mock-checks guests with a *magnometer* as they step on stage. And, on the 2006 Valentine's Day cover for Tel Aviv's *Achbar Ha'ir* (the urban mouse) magazine a forlorn cupid stands at the entrance to a café, his bow and arrow confiscated and a security guard scanning his body with a *magnometer* wand (figure 6).



Figure 6: *Achbar Ha'ir* cover Valentine's Day 2006

Similarly, Edan Alterman (2002) parodies the pervasive security sound in “Security Groove”, a two-minute movie where the suspicious security soundtrack takes centre stage.²³ Composed from fragments of security sounds across Tel Aviv the “groove” showcases all the routine rhythms of the check: the electronic beeps and bleeps, the bags being unzipped, the Velcro ripped, the car boots opened and then slammed shut again, as security guards check boots, bags and bodies all over town. Their questions “Open the boot please”, and “Are you armed?” as well as the musical *magnometers* are woven into the tune, including a “woo-u-woo” *magnometer* wolf whistle as a female member of the public is scanned. The rhythmic beeps and beats draw our attention to a kind of security percussion or a *bitachon* back-drop to everyday life as people pass through the city’s security checks.

Security is an ingrained part of life, so much so that many of my informants, friends and acquaintances cannot recall how they felt when security measures were first put in place. The neighbour who remembers noticing at first but now passes through with barely a glance at the guard. The informant who recalls seeing security as an absolute necessity in order to feel safe in a public place. The friends who were shocked to remember they had forgotten the cannabis lying in the bottom of their bags as they stood for their first security check. Nobody mentioned any rapid expansion or escalation of security practice, any attack on civil liberties or physical and personal intrusions. “We open our bags, allow guards to run security wands close to our bodies, open our car trunks without a second thought” writes journalist blogger Paula (Paula Says, January 2005). Security exists as ordinary and expected. “*Ma la’asot?*” what can you do? people say. It is a sacrifice or responsibility for all, one of the ongoing ramifications of a protracted conflict over the uncertain internal and external, social and territorial parameters of the state.

The uncertain margins of the security check go beyond a sense that conflict and collective violence are experienced as states of crisis, states of emergency or states of exception, as events or experiences that can be located or bound to particular spaces

²³ <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=IFQnMo0C83Q>

and times (Das and Poole 2004). The security check does not stand in opposition to normality, it is not exceptional but mundane. What Giorgio Agamben drawing on Walter Benjamin calls the “state of exception” has become quite ordinary for many Tel Avivians (Agamben 2005). Yet whereas Agamben’s exceptions and spaces of inclusion and exclusion appear in the spectral figure of *homo sacer* retrieved from a Roman legal past, the un-exceptional effects of the security check are embedded and embodied within practices of “everyday” life in the present (see Agamben 1998). The margin pervades security practice.

Through the checking and re-checking of bodies the margin and the “exception” emerge as spaces and practices which seem to be about where the continual reproduction of a particular securitized or suspicious citizenship, ethno-nationalist uncertainties and racialized notions of danger make their appearance and are played out in present daily interaction. Extraordinary measures have paradoxically become routines of ordinary life. It is to the ordinary, not only the extraordinary or exceptional that we must focus our anthropological attentions if we are to appreciate the ways in which such security procedures persist as social practice.

As such, ordinary security practice has visceral effects on citizen-subjects. Fear of suicide bombers and more abstract anxieties, the physical choreography of the check and the opening of the body, the uncertainties and unknowing is embodied, carried in the bodies and reactions of its subjects whether inside Israel or overseas. Some people noticed a profound security sensibility whenever they were abroad. Some admit with a little embarrassment to feeling anxious upon finding themselves in European public space with few or no security staff in sight. Others tell humorous stories of becoming confused by department store officials or supermarket security staff charged with keeping a look out for shoplifters and troublemakers at exits and entranceways only to be accosted by odd Israelis opening up their bags; unsettled tourists stopping in anticipation of a check which does not exist.

Suspicion is embodied, inscribed in these security interactions, in the bodies of citizens who expect and enact its presence. “A political culture of uncertainty and

fear” writes Yael Navaro-Yashin, “marks the bodies of its subjects to the point of haunting them” (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 181). It is there in the habitual and automatic responses, the expectations and bodily movements of the ordinary. The cultural intimacies and abnormalities of normality often become apparent only when reflected upon or viewed from the outside. “You know it is funny how we just do it automatically, we go and we open our bags just like normal” says Hadas, having a cigarette and Sudoku break at her kiosk, standing, raising her arms and twirling around in a checkpoint parody. “If one day there is peace and so all the security guards will be gone we will still come up to the entrance like this (mimes opening a bag), and do this (twirls around opening out her arms), and there will be nobody there to check us! (laughter)”.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined the inclusive and intimate interactions of security practice and how such social security-relations may recreate certain suspicions and citizens. As security guards check bodies for signs of suspicion, as people pass through the checks, open their bodies, point out something suspicious or take a sideways glance at someone else or stare into space and go through the motions, they are practicing a particular kind of suspicious citizenship and an intimate engagement, a tension-filled interaction between the guard and the guarded, the checker and the checked. A palimpsest of physical practice as one after another people check and are checked. Bodies walk by, stand in line, open arms, present themselves for inspection, sigh, huff and puff, open jackets and bags, lean forwards, bend down, turn around, wave magnetometers over limbs, ask questions, look, listen and feel for suspects. As such the security check practices a kind of consensual and concerted effort to sort the safe from the unsafe, who belongs and who does not, common responsibilities to open and reveal, a signing up to fears, anxieties, suspicions and uncertainty; a vulnerable kind of citizenship credential. It is, I argue, in this kind of interaction, this ordinary yet odd dance around danger that Israeli citizens are formed.

Part two: Concluding remarks

The security checks, gates and guards put in place to search and screen for potential terrorists are a form of face-to-face surveillance that seeks to manage and minimise risk, to predict, pre-empt and prevent a dangerous event or explosion before it happens. The checking of documents, bags and bodies by security staff and the patrolling of streets by civil guards are all part of this drive to make people legible so that danger may be known. However, in a context in which the enemy is invisible and unknown reading danger off documents and reading danger off bodies is actually rather difficult. Security staff zigzag back and forth and in between specific signs of suspicion such as wires, big coats and nervous behaviour and more abstract notions of someone “strange” or “not normal”, between ideas about anybody and anxieties about Arab bodies. Risk may be associated with difference in a dialectic between concrete signs and abstract signals. Security staff stare at a confusing sea of indistinguishable bodies slipping between looking for specific signs of suspicion and looking for “Arab” faces, looking for someone suspicious and trying to sort the safe person from the dangerous suspect. Citizens stand in line, grumble, criticise and come together in a kind of security sociality, opening their bags and bodies to *bitachon*.

In the midst of these margins of suspicion and security slippages a kind of racialized citizenship appears and is reproduced, embodied and embedded in the everyday “intimate” interactions between security staff and citizens. So that Jewish Israelis coalesce in a kind of normalised cultural intimacy at the security check whilst non-Jews, Palestinians and Palestinian Arab citizens are rendered suspicious and suspect. Security practices emerge as neither straight-forward racial profiling nor empty performance, nor are such practices all “about” security from suicide bombers or terrorists as such. Rather they are the exclusive and inclusive playing out of ethno-nationalist uncertainties in everyday interactions; spaces where the fundamental claims and assurances of the Jewish ethno-nation become unsettled and revealed in all their uncertain instability. It is through these encounters, this dance around danger, that Israeli citizens are formed.

The will to legibility present in the suspicious practices of the security check, the attention to accent and appearance, disposition and demeanour, in efforts to read danger off bodies and tell populations apart turns into a reproduction of illegibility and uncertainty about who is safe and who is suspicious, who is a threat and who belongs. The security margins are not simply static spaces and populations to be managed and made legible so that risk may be minimised and danger may be known, but are active and creative and often outside such concepts of control.

Indistinguishable populations and the indeterminacy of the security check mean that embodied, racialized notions of difference and danger cannot easily be read. Bodies become even more opaque and uncertain. Despite all the suspicious signs and suppositions security guards and civil guards find it very difficult to tell between bodies; Adam stops a group of Palestinian Arab architects, Dudi an Indian tourist, Barak runs after any woman wearing a headscarf and Moti questions a *Mizrachi* man by the side of the street.

There is the uncertainty and illegibility of the encounter itself; the negotiation of safety, belonging and citizenship between the checker and the checked. For those who are stopped and questioned, who bear the brunt of an ethno-nationalist ethos in practice lies the possibility of exclusion and arrest. Rather than making citizens legible and known security may be paradoxically experienced and undone by the illegibility of its own practices, documents and deeds. Such uncertainty and unease creates an unbounded process in which the suspect is always potentially present yet ultimately unknown (Eckert 2008, Kelly 2008). And yet the security check persists. The potentiality of violent explosion - of a body strapped with bombs - and demographic fears surrounding the perceived precariousness of the Jewish state keep it firmly in place, a testament not to what it can tell us about the people who pass through but to what it cannot (Jeganathan 2004).

Part two has explored the doing of security, who or what, how and why, security staff are anticipating and surveilling for, asking what such practices actually do, pointing to the playing out of illegible populations, indeterminate dangers and ethno-

nationalist uncertainties. But security is not all anticipatory, pre-emptive, activity; from time to time the threat actually arrives. The next part of the thesis follows national and local events as they unfold in the field, examines what happens when the anticipated attack, conflict, or threat arrives, and asks what are people actually afraid of? As war with Hizbullah breaks out in July 2006 I follow the flow of events, experiences and activities that dominated my informants', friends' and neighbours' lives. In doing so the security and ethnographic focus shifts from the street-level security checks of previous chapters to national security concerns, news reports and the daily media-fuelled discussions at my neighbourhood coffee kiosk.

Part three: Protection and the (in)competent state

This part of the thesis examines and evokes some of the events and experiences that unfold when the anticipated attack, conflict, or threat arrives. As such it seeks to explore and provide a sense of what people are actually afraid of and concerned about, of security and state protection that may emerge and endure not in military forces or security checks but within critical conversations and communities of critique.

Part three uses discussion of several recent events in Israel to explore relations between the state, security and citizens. The first episode is the Second Lebanon War during the summer of 2006, the first major hostilities with Hizbullah since May 2000 and widely perceived as a comprehensive military and political failure. The second is a series of political scandals that emerged in the wake of an Israel-Hizbullah ceasefire. The third is the popular sensation surrounding the escape and subsequent police chase of Benny Sela, a man known as Israel's most notorious serial rapist, a few months after the end of the war. Throughout following chapters security circulates in anxieties and critiques about and commitments to the protective capabilities and competencies of the state.

Picture a bright kiosk at the corner of a small public *gina* (garden) in Tel Aviv, one of the small neighbourhood cafes people gather in to take coffee, read the paper and catch up on local gossip. Plants are shrivelled in the summer heat and humidity hangs heavy in the air. Dogs drink from the water fountain and collapse, tongues lolling, in the shade whilst their owners gather under trees for tea, coffee and conversation. Radio reports and aeroplane engines overhead serve as aural reminders of a war that is taking place elsewhere. Neighbours sit on stools and makeshift benches, cradling ice-coffee cups or smoking cigarettes. They sit surrounding Ilan, a kiosk regular, lover of philosophical conversations, literature, strong coffee and even stronger cigarettes, who sits, scratching his stubble, sipping his espresso and telling tales of his recent military stint in Lebanon. He complains about the bumbling war effort,

pausing only to stub out one smouldering cigarette and light up another. Picture people paying attention and then echoing his comments, casting a critical eye over newspaper articles and berating the bragging politicians. Picture them going home, to work or to study and returning the next day to do the same thing all over again. Imagine them hoping that things will improve but all the while suspecting they will not. And alongside these daily disputes and squabbles, voices are raised in agreement and dissent, arms wave, cigarettes are lit and flies are swatted. Hadas, kiosk owner, coffee-maker and cake-baker, bangs cups and saucers in the sink and reaches for her *Winstons* having decided under the circumstances, to quit quitting the habit. Her son, an intelligence operative, was who-knew where? On the border? Or behind enemy lines? The radio presenters cut short their up-beat conversation with a melancholy ballad. “Some soldiers must have died” murmurs my next-door neighbour Nadav, confirming the well-known musical message²⁴.

The elusive or illusory ensemble of discourses and practices we call “the state” and “security” is represented and recast by these critical citizens, casting their doubts and aspersions, hints and allegations. The idea of the state as protector and provider of security resides in the agitated and speculative critiques of citizens worrying about their soldiers, worrying over one another and worrying about the conduct of a military conflict. It is present also in the anxious faces of chattering neighbours, acquaintances and strangers. The idea of protection and security circulated in the imaginations and conversations of these citizen-consumers of news and sensation, reading and discussing the daily papers, sitting at home and watching reports on TV.

The notion of the state and the public, as Yael Navaro-Yashin so insightfully reminds us, are neither separate nor opposing distinctions, but part and parcel of “the same domain” (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 2). This is particularly so in Israel where, as I have discussed, the projects of state-building and the creation of a new Jewish-Israeli people from amongst the mix of Diaspora communities, were entwined from the

²⁴ The performance of popular sad songs of grief and loss form a central part of annual remembrance day commemorations, the most visible being a concert held in Tel Aviv’s Kikar Rabin (Rabin Square).

start. Jews required a state of their own in order to be rebuilt within it; “We’ve come to the Land to build and be built” ran the lyrics of an early Zionist song (Handelman 2004: 48; see also Boyarin 1994, Elon 1981, Paine 1993, Weiss 2002). The first Jewish “pioneers” in Palestine were settler-soldiers required to protect themselves and the pre-state Jewish community from the British (colonials) and the Arabs (indigenous others). Today, in a small country and in the context of ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, with compulsory army service for the majority of young men and women, and with an ever present bureaucratic apparatus, notions of the state and the people or public overlap and intertwine. But as previous chapters have shown, this is a particular Jewish-Israeli public. As the following episodes and chapters will show, citizens routinely critique the idea and competency of a protective state, exposing its fictitious form and yet reproducing its mystical allure through the very same care-full commentary. Critique and commitment are not binary opposites but complementary couplings in the creation of an illusive state protection.

As a period of Israel’s recent history, characterised by government attempts to unilaterally separate from Palestinian populations in order to protect Israeli citizens and increase security, these episodes highlight the double-edged difficulties of state protection. Actions taken in the name of security may paradoxically produce even more insecurity. The events are exemplary in the sense that each evokes experiences of lived political realities and perceptions of protection in Israel – a country that prides itself on being the only viable democracy in the Middle East, with a relatively free and opinionated press, strong national identity and lively, critical population. Exploring these seemingly different threats – from without (Hizbullah) and within (scandal and Sela), military, political, criminal – provokes perceptions on fundamental anxieties about security and the state’s capacity to provide protection. Tackling these episodes together also enables us to tease out more general comparisons about security in Israel and the ways in which experiences of state protection may arise in its very absence and incapacity.

Each episode contains an ironic twist or two. In the months preceding the war the Israeli Prime Minister spoke out about peace, secure, permanent borders and making

the country “a fun place to live” (Aluf Benn and Yossi Vertner, haaretz.com 10.03.2006). Israel’s Chief of Staff boasted of the country’s secure position, slashing military budgets and cutting resources for reserve units. “Israel is not facing an existential threat”, he promised, “In 2006 we find ourselves in one of the best geo-strategic positions we have ever known” (Ari Shavit, haaretz.com 17.11.2006). Yet security was not so secure and the latter half of 2006 proved anything but “fun” with a barrage of belligerent voices and a hasty military campaign failing to hide the incapacity and incompetence at the heart of the state. The country went to war in the name of security and citizens seemed abandoned by an ambivalent or absent state. Finally the revelation of a series of political scandals only served to confirm people’s worst fears about just how corrupt, ineffective and un-protective the state really was.

In the case of Benny Sela the public sensation surrounding the news that the infamous criminal had escaped prison and the farcical chase that ensued triggered a popular backlash characterised by public conjecture and critique. The regime could not run a war, nor was it even capable of catching a runaway rapist. People’s own humorous projections and cynical speculations revealed perceptions and practices of security rooted in the very failure of the state to fulfil its basic stately responsibilities to protect the population.

The following chapters approach events as they were experienced and engaged with by friends, neighbours and informants reading and discussing the news, their opinions, arguments and critiques. I follow major events as they occurred with headline stories for the day and conversations that took place at the kiosk or at home and were hastily scribbled in my notebook. My aim is not only to recognise and reflect the flow between local and wider contexts, neighbourhood discussions and national developments, or news media and kiosk conversations but to evoke this alternating focus in the very way of writing. Discussion jumps back and forth between news articles and neighbours’ conversations, between national and local events, drawing the bigger picture out of the immediate circumstances through which they played out. The aim is to follow the flow of events and allow analysis to emerge ethnographically.

In all three war-time, scandal-time and escape-time incidents the flurry of publicity and popular critique unmasked the protective incapacities of the Israeli state. Revealed in reactions to these events is the state as a source of both protection and danger or violence and anxiety, of citizens hoping for a competent state capable of protecting them but doubting its ability to do so. All the publicity and critical conversations surround the war, the scandal and the escape, show the fragility and fabrication of a securing state at the same time as it conjures the desire for state protection (Wedeen 2003, Tilly 1985). Hope always implies an element of doubt and despair. Kiosk criticisms and TV conversations reveal the fiction or fabrication of protection yet reproduce the strong protective state through the very act of committed care-full critique (Wedeen 2003, Tilly 1985).

Part three begins with a discussion of the public sphere and the state. Chapters five to seven then take up each episode in turn and explore various and sometimes contradictory understandings of relations between ideas of the state, citizens, security and protection. Firstly, where the state is often invoked as a source of security and provider of protection against external threats, it may actually generate the reverse, producing profound danger, critique and public anxiety. Second, events that appear to play out on different scales or registers - national security (Hizbullah) and personal safety (Sela) - may intertwine; both concerned with fundamental critiques and commitments for the protective state. Third, and as a corollary, protection may actually reside not in any "real" institution or infrastructure but is reproduced as a kind of phenomenological reality through common communities of critique and experience shared in the absence of competent state activity (see Wedeen 2003: 682). As we will see, the sites of everyday engagement and critique where people attempt to comprehend political and criminal events in their lives compose a central domain for the revelation and reproduction of an (in)effective and (un)protective state. Finally, these popular practices, unveiling the often threatening or scandalous life of the state seem only to magnify its protective ideal; people's hopes and doubts, ideas of credibility and commitment keep it going. This third part of the thesis is an

attempt to explore these protective arguments while telling the tales that bring them to the fore.

Communities of Critique and the Public Sphere

The wartime, scandal-time and escape-time conversations and deliberations created a temporary and self-organised “public sphere” (Habermas 1996 [1962]) in which citizens, many of whom were acquaintances or strangers to one another, debated and discussed on the radio and television, in and with daily newspapers, and in café and kiosk conversations. Contrary to Richard Sennett’s (1977) argument that in Euro-American societies public life has become a matter of formal obligation, an inward-looking condition based upon passions and sentiments felt within the individual self, close friends and family - a criticism many Israelis also make of their own society - people’s daily interaction in communities of critique at the coffee kiosk were actually outward looking, “public” and communal, reproducing a sense of personal commitment and commonality in the face of external or internal threats and government incompetence, pitting their informed opinions against the protective assurances of the Israeli regime.

This part of the thesis seeks to explore security through the experience and narratives of war, political scandal and an escaped criminal, through a particular critical public sphere of newspapers and TV news, their readers, watchers and the coffee kiosk they frequent. Habermas (1996 [1962]) locates the origins of a critical public sphere within the specific historical and structural transitions of 18th century Western European societies from absolutist to more democratic forms of government. It denotes a discursive space between the state and civil society in which (male) citizens could engage in free, equal and rational debate about important matters of authority, politics and commerce, thus forming both a relatively cohesive public opinion and a potentially powerful political force (Habermas 1996 [1962], Eagleton 1984). According to Habermas’ historical argument London and Parisian coffeehouses were the central sites for such critical activity, and in this and other

respects, during these periods of conflict and public anxiety, my neighbourhood coffee kiosk and numerous other cafes and kiosks across town represent these aspects of a public sphere and a space for communities of argument and critique.

If Habermas' own formulation of the 18th century bourgeois coffeehouse has been criticised as too romanticised and idealised an institution, places where men of any social status came together as equals for the purpose of conversation and critique "merely civilised talk, bonhomie, and close friendship over a cup of coffee" (Sennett 1974: 81), so I attempt not to idealise the critical commentaries of informants, friends, neighbours and strangers over coffee, tea and cake, in front of newspapers, televisions and computer screens. Rather, this public sphere of people talking about changing events provides a window into how such seemingly spectacular and sensational security events are perceived, apprehended and lived out in daily life. If the anthropologist looks only to the extraordinary elements of conflict and violence then that is what one finds; the extraordinary and the exceptional. As I argue in pages to come my approach here aims to explore and evoke the rest of the time, the non-violent, ordinary discussions over newspapers, debates in front of the TV set and kiosk conversations through which conflict, most of the time, is lived (Kelly 2008).

Security exists not only in the more obvious military institutions or materiality of guards standing outside markets and cafes and shopping malls, but arises as a kind of phenomenological reality in critical communities sitting at the kiosk, discussing political and military developments over coffee, cake, and perhaps a cigarette, worrying about friends and family fighting, or sheltering from rockets, berating the bumbling police or politicians or military commanders, petting their dogs, swatting flies, listening to the radio and reading the daily news. This public sphere is less extra and more ordinary, the snippets of opinion and conversation are not romanticised - as Habermas' coffee drinkers have been - but the real bits of discussion and debate through which events were read and experienced by the people or particular "public sphere" around me. And as part two of the thesis suggests, this is a particular Jewish-Israeli public sphere. Elsewhere all over town and all over Israel there were other public spheres, doubtless with similar, different, conflicting and consensual opinions

and critiques, but their experiences are another story – this is the public sphere of which I was a part and the one through which I can tell these exemplary security events.

Whereas Habermas' public sphere is a distinctly male sphere, premised on the exclusion of women and a clear distinction between public and domestic relations, the communities of critique I encountered involved both men and women and flowed back and forth between the "domestic" and the "public" so that opinions and family or flatmate arguments sparked by the evening television news would be related to kiosk customers the next day – ideas and news flowed in and out and around the kiosk.

As I became more comfortable in my Tel Aviv surroundings it became clear that if I wanted to know more about what was happening in the city, about people's lives and perspectives beyond my own circle of new friends, security guards and civil guards then my local kiosk was a good place to go. And as I, like some other customers new to Tel Aviv, began to build a life in a new place, in the hours after my language school or frustrating days trying to gain access to security guards, the kiosk offered a space to build social relations, to while away hot summer hours, to begin, end or break a journey to or from field sites, and to become known in the neighbourhood. The kiosk, as a place of communication, debate and newspaper consumption was much more than a spot to stop for coffee or tea or cola. It was a place to pore over sections of the newspaper, catch up on gossip and the important matters of the day. While for much of the time people were as likely to discuss the latest celebrity party, a new Hollywood movie, or the football fortunes of *Ha'Poel Tel Aviv*, when war broke out, when political scandal erupted and when a rapist ran away from prison custody, conversation turned into intense political and social debate. The kiosk was a communicative arena in which issues were located and aired, discussed and critiqued, in which experiences and often heated opinions were related and debated in the construction of critique. Sometimes conversation would coalesce around a particular story, sometimes drifting without focus from issue to issue, sometimes sitting in silence as people read, reflected or listened to the radio. This is not to argue

that everyone engaged in these lively discussions nor that everyone held similar perspectives on the issues at hand. The kiosk is a place where the meanings of news stories, experiences of the events that confronted people, a sense of community and the ability of the state to protect its citizens were both regenerated and created through the collision of opinion and critique.

In following sections I attempt to take the reader through some of these daily conversations and critiques – many located at my local neighbourhood kiosk – that were a regular feature of my neighbours' and my own days during the summer of 2006 and proceeding months, following the flow of Tel Aviv life. People's critical commentaries, humour, rumour, hope and doubt, anxiety and critique all emerge as rather intangible yet essential sites for the reproduction of the idea of a strong, protective Israeli state. Like Habermas' 18th century coffeehouse critics whose universal, reasonable principles signified a resistance to absolutism and yet redrew the very bourgeois constraints and boundaries of class and power in terms of their own model of discourse; between those men of property or status able to engage in rational argument and those who could not, the kiosk criticisms incorporated a degree of commitment through which citizens redrew their own devotion to the hope and desire and practice of protection.

If the function of criticism, as Terry Eagleton argues, is to shine a light on the tyranny of the times - the absolutist state in 18th century England and what he terms the "bourgeois state" today - and, like Habermas' classic public sphere, to provide a discourse and practice through which hopes and critique may generate a collective political force, then this kiosk criticism reveals that the fiction of state protection may paradoxically also reproduce the very binds of belonging, commitment and belief.

Anthropology and the State

Weber, who famously defined the state as “a compulsory association which organises domination” through violence and physical force, also calls attention to the subjective dynamics that make and maintain the state as social reality, “in reality, obedience (to the reality of the state) is determined by highly robust motives of fear and hope – fear of the vengeance of magical powers within the power-holder, hope for reward in this world in the beyond – and besides all this, by interests of the most varied sorts” (Gerth and Mills 1991[1946] : 79). Yet the hopes and fears we come across here have less to do with a mystical monopoly over violence or metaphysical reward. Rather, it has to do with hope for a competent and protective state and the fear or suspicion that such hopes are endlessly deferred, never living up to citizens’ dreams – that incompetence and incapacity reign supreme.

And, within anthropology and academic discourse there is a strong allusion to and interrogation of the fictions and abstractions, the fears and hopes that may produce the state as social reality. Indeed, ideas about fictions, fantasies and imaginations are fundamental to our thinking about nation-ness and the cluster of abstractions we call the state. As Radcliffe-Brown first put it;

In writing on political institutions there is a good deal of discourse about the nature and origin of the State, which is usually represented as being an entity over and above the human individuals that make up a society, having as one of its attributes something called “sovereignty” and sometimes spoken of as having a will (law being often defined as the will of the State) or as issuing commands. The State in this sense does not exist in the phenomenal world; it is a fiction of the philosophers (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xxiii, Aretxaga 2003).

It has been argued that the notion of the state itself is a “mask” (Abrams 1988: 82) or a “fetish” (Taussig 1992: 157), which serves to disguise the reality of power struggles (Mitchell 1991). Like Radcliffe-Brown, Philip Abrams questions the materiality of the state, this idea that there exists some solid and stable super-structure above government, politics or the police (Abrams 1988). It is modern myth, he argues, not a thing but an idea, a reification and an illusory fabrication that masks

the political reality and power relations at work. The state, he suggests, simply does not exist;

The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practise. It is itself the mask which prevents out seeing political practice as it is. It is, one could almost say, the mind of a mindless world, the purpose of purposeless conditions, the opium of the citizen (Abrams 1988: 82).

Abrams' argument urges an unveiling of the mask of fiction and fabrication, or in Marxist terms a lifting of false consciousness. His call is for a more insightful, emancipatory kind of social science.

Likewise both Anderson (1983) and Taussig (1992) train their critical eye and Marx-influenced analyses on the fictional qualities of the nation and the state respectively. Tracing the origins of nationalism through the emergence of print capitalism, Anderson draws our attention to what he terms the "imagination" of nations (1983). The nation, he contends, is neither pre-existing, primordial nor essentially real – notions at the root of many national movements – but must be brought into being. It is an "imagined" community, an artificial creation. His work exposes the myth-making behind the ancient, indigenous and exclusive claims of nationality and nationhood. Only by revealing the fictive process behind the fabrication, he implies, can one uncover the imagination and ideology of national constructions (Anderson 1983). Where Abrams finds the "mask" and Anderson "imagination", Taussig reveals the "fetish". The state, Taussig argues, is a fetish for our times, something both secretive, "sacred" and "revered" (Taussig 1992: 117, 125). For Taussig the state takes on a magical quality, much like a totem, it may not exist as a "thing" but is reified and deified as a magical entity. His ethnographic work follows this "sacred quality of state power", exploring the state as a source of public fetishism, "thralldom combined with disgust" for its subjects, highlighting the religious character of a supposedly secular system and the complicity of those usually conceived as marginal populations in actively reconstructing the ideology, the fabrication and fetish of their state (Taussig 1992: 129, 132).

For Taussig, as for Abrams and Anderson, analysis is underpinned by a kind of Marxist emancipatory possibility or revelation. The state must be de-mystified and deconstructed for real power relations to emerge. However, as Talal Asad has argued, the allusion to Marx's (1961[1867]) account of false consciousness or the commodity as fetish is not always helpful (Asad 2004). For Marx, the commodity as fetish arises from the process by which "a definite social relation between men... assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things". This, Marx suggests, means that the commodity form masks the productive power of the labourer; the commodity is an inert object falsely imagined as real (Marx 1961 [1867]: 72, Asad 2004: 282). And as Asad reminds us, the reification of social relations of production is very different to the abstract structure of the state. Abstraction he argues is a fundamental feature of the state, a requisite characteristic, an indispensable political and legal discourse and everyday practise. As such, unlike the commodity fetish, "the state's abstract character hides nothing. It is not an illusion" (Asad 2004: 282).

Indeed, my Israeli informants, friends and neighbours were not the dupes of a "fetish", "mask" or false consciousness. The "imagination" of the Israeli nation has been well and truly de-mystified (although not dislodged) by a swathe of Israeli and Palestinian scholarly work (see for example Kimmerling 1993, Pappé 1992, 2003, Khalidi 1997, Morris 1987, Yiftachel 2006, Zureik 1979). Moreover, the state is often experienced not as an illusion or an abstract notion; it is not empty or devoid of content but it abundantly clear, from the bureaucratic offices dotted around Tel Aviv, to the government ministry buildings and annual conscription of teenagers for military service. Likewise the state does not exist solely in imagined or abstract isolation from its citizens, rather citizens themselves as bureaucrats, politicians, police officers and soldiers make up the State of Israel. The state is not illusory, it is all too keenly felt, by my Austrian (non-Jewish) and Israeli (Jewish) friends jumping bureaucratic hoops in order to marry, by my Israeli flatmate dealing with a national insurance officer chasing him up for payments missed during a decade living in Europe, by my friend's brother called up to fight in the latest war in Lebanon. It is "security" not the state which appears as illusion. Or, in other words it is not all

aspects of the state, but to return to Weber's terms the fear that the state cannot provide protection and security that appears illusory, revealing the states own un-protective practices, fragile monopoly over violence, and the continuous hope for security and protection to come (Wedeen 2003, Tilly 1985).

In addition critique and deconstruction are hardly the exclusive province of intellectual thinkers or the anthropologist. Criticism was common practice during the war, during political scandals and during Sela's escape, an everyday popular mode of relating to the state. As such, citizens were more than aware of an illusion of state security and its incapacity to protect. As we will see the unmasking of the protective state in all its incompetence and fictional reality may only magnify its mystifying ideal (see also Aretxaga 2003). Discussions, debates, news articles, television programmes, rumour, critique, humorous tales and anxious speculations only seemed to proliferate during these dramatic events, dominating social life. The very same people who reveal the illusory "mask" of security through critical commentaries recreate it through their own commitments, hopes and doubts for a state capable of protecting them.

Yet, whereas Yael Navaro-Yashin sees the enduring and illusory force of the Turkish state in psychic desire and cynical reproduction (according to Žižek's reading of Lacan), I read citizens redressing and reproducing the effective and protective state through common communities of critique, shared experience of anxiety and alarm over state (in)security and incapacity, and a hopeful connection to the state. Their critiques are not simply cynical – aware of the unreal construction yet continuing to live "as if" it were real – as with Žižek (1995), but care-full; filled with doubt and criticism of the state's inability to secure, yet full of hope and concern for how things should be. These stories of Tel Aviv citizens during times of war, scandal and escape demonstrate how episodes of collective anxiety and critique can bring about common recreations and commitments to the idea of a protective state, registered in the critical yet committed reactions of citizens and predicated on their hopes for future protection. In following sections I will expand these thoughts on hope, doubt and protection that these events dramatise so well, to explore the ebb

and flow and durability of an effective and protective state. Discussion eschews tidy definitions of the state, security or protection and seeks to leave such ideas open as our very object of inquiry. I point to both the empirical evocation of how an effective and protective state is endured by citizens hoping and doubting over its corruption or incapacity to protect, and how, despite its popular de-mystification, the protective state defies deconstruction, enduring in the critical hopes of an apprehensive citizenry, not as so much cynical reproduction but as care-full critique.

First, chapter five seeks to explore the public sphere, practices, perspectives, and participation to do with national security and protection during the conflict with Hizbullah. Chapter six tackles security threats in the form of political scandal and corruption, and chapter seven examines the security threat posed by the hunt for an escaped convict. Part three ends with a concluding discussion and comparison of security, the state and protection across the three chapters and episodes.

Chapter five: Conflict and communities of critique

Day one: July 12 “War” begins

“Northern attack: 11 wounded, 2 soldiers kidnapped” (ynetnews.com

12.07.2006)

Under massive fire in a co-ordinated attack, Hizbullah kidnaps two IDF soldiers, demands prisoner release in exchange for troops. Israel confirms two soldiers missing. IDF strikes targets in south Lebanon, conducts ground search in bid to locate troops. Ahiya Raved, ynetnews.com 12.07.2006

Chapter five seeks to explore criticisms and concerns surrounding threats to national security and state protection while telling the events and experiences that provoked them and preoccupied people in Tel Aviv during “war” with Hizbullah in the summer of 2006.

Context to the conflict

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a former mayor of Jerusalem, football fanatic and stalwart *Likudnik* (Likud party supporter) swept to power in March 2006 at the helm of break-away party *Kadima* following the sudden stroke and hospitalisation of premier Ariel Sharon. “A country that is fun to live in”, he told reporters whilst setting out his pre-election vision for a new and prosperous Israel, stating his continuing support for Sharon’s political party and unilateral legacy: securing Israel’s borders through a controversial policy of self-initiated separation or “*hitnatkut*”, “disengagement”, from the Palestinian territories, “It will be a country with less external violence and more personal security” he intoned (Aluf Benn and Yossi Vertner, haaretz.com: 16.03.2006). Yet in spite of Olmert clinching a coalition government deal in the precarious world of Israel’s proportional politics, the months following the general elections were far from “fun”.

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement in power in Gaza since Palestinian elections earlier in the year continued to fire homemade Qassam rockets into southern Israel and stage the occasional cross-border raid. Then, on June 25th a collective of 3 Palestinian groups killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped a third, sparking a major diplomatic crisis and pushing Israeli-Palestinian relations to the brink of battle. Three weeks later, whilst all eyes were turned southwards to the worsening situation in Gaza, Hizbullah - the Lebanese based Shi'ite Islamic "Party of God" - waded into the fray, kidnapping two Israeli soldiers along the border with Lebanon and demanding the immediate release of Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails.

The attack was met with apparent boldness and belligerence by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz, both national security neophytes with little or no security pedigree in a country where military credentials are usually a political pre-requisite. Their tactics catapulted Israelis into a summer-long conflict, conjuring the spectre of events and experiences acquired during an 18 year long "Lebanon nightmare" (Roni Singer-Heruti, haaretz.com: 31.07.2006).

Anxieties over what eventually became known as Lebanon War II were accompanied by visceral memories of defeat in the military morass that was southern Lebanon. The left-of-centre newspaper Ha'aretz warned against yet another "nightmare" of embroilment and entanglement in Lebanon, cautioning Israelis against finding themselves waist-deep once again in the "Lebanon quagmire" (Ze'ev Schiff 04.08.2006).

Israel Defence Forces (IDF) involvement in Lebanon (and imbrications in the country's post 1975-76 civil war conflicts) began in 1978 in response to a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) attack on an Israeli bus along the central Haifa-Tel Aviv road. *Operation Litani* pushed the PLO north from the international border and towards the *Litani* river in an attempt to remove the strategic threat posed by PLO launch sites, set up a military buffer zone (later called the "security zone") and shore up Lebanese Maronite forces working in the south. In 1981 the US brokered a cease-

fire following a two week war of attrition between Palestinian guerrillas firing rockets at northern Israeli targets and the IDF and South Lebanon Army retaliating against PLO positions. However, after the assassination of the Israeli ambassador to London in 1982 the Israeli government under Menachim Begin (Prime Minister) and Ariel Sharon (then Defence Minister), now in cahoots with Bashir Gemayel's Lebanese Maronite faction, launched a full-scale military assault. Their optimistic aim was to transform the entire region, eliminating the PLO presence in the south and propelling Gemayel into power, simultaneously eradicating both Syrian and PLO influence within Lebanon and installing a friendly regime in Beirut.

Ironically labelled *Operation Peace for Galilee*, Israel's Lebanon offensive lasted much longer than official 48-hour estimates, instigating an 18 year conflict that followed in the wake of the ill-fated siege of Beirut and Gemayel's assassination shortly after his election as President, witnessed massacres at *Sabra* and *Shatilla*²⁵ refugee camps, and spawned the meteoric rise of Iranian-backed socio-political movement and armed resistance militia Hizbullah.

Israel's high casualty rate, the exhaustive guerrilla-style skirmishes, the occupation of the "security zone" and violent 18 year entanglement in southern Lebanon became known euphemistically as "the Lebanese mud". The post-war after-shock rocked Israeli society, shaking more established notions of "purity of arms" and re-invigorating a floundering peace movement.

The IDF remained in southern Lebanon until May 2000. During this time Israel became embroiled in two further extensive military campaigns in Lebanon -

²⁵ The Sabra and Shatila massacre was a massacre of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians by Lebanese Maronite militia between September 16 and 18, 1982 two days after Bashir Gemayel's assassination. Estimates of people killed range between 328 and 3,500. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF), in control of Beirut, surrounded Beirut's Palestinian refugee camps immediately after the assassination. While the IDF was not directly involved in the massacre they did not stop the Maronite militiamen from entering the camps under their control.

Operations *Accountability* in 1993 and *Grapes of Wrath* in 1996 - both of which were designed as punitive measures to push back Hizbullah from its southern strongholds and prevent *Katyusha* rocket fire on northern Israeli communities. The first ended in an ambiguous ceasefire agreement, the second following widespread international condemnation after an Israeli shell killed approximately 100 Lebanese civilians sheltering at a UN post in Kfar Qana. Neither military operation succeeded in rooting out Hizbullah guerrillas nor stamping out their rocket-launching cells. As IDF casualties continued to mount Israeli voices clamoured in favour of a full retreat, and in 2000, amid strong anti-war protests from soldiers' mothers and under the leadership of then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Israeli troops finally withdrew from southern Lebanon for good. In Lebanon Hizbullah hailed the retreat as a great victory, and, having forced Israel to vacate occupied territory, proceeded to install their own complex military infrastructure across the ceded south.

It is this spectral quality of Lebanese conflicts, the traces of “flashbacks” (Goel Pinto, haaretz.com 01.08.2006) and deathly déjà-vus etched onto Israeli experience that re-emerged from the past to colour the political present. Israel has to get over the “Lebanon trauma and go into Lebanon in full force to get the job done” Yisrael Katz, rightist politician and one time defence aid to Sharon, declared on Army Radio.

The “trauma”; the so-called Lebanon quagmire and all the quandaries associated with conflict in that country, from civilian casualties in Kfar Qana to critical questions of conduct and leadership, public security and political abandonment returned to haunt the current conflict. Reflections on 1982 circulated as a constant background to present experience, in the form of newspaper analyses or neighbours pondering the bravura and folly of their youthful soldierly selves while doubting their stomach to cope with this new conflict 25 years down the line; “Thank goodness so far I have not been called up. When you are 18 you don’t think about dying, you think you are indestructible. But now...” my flatmate Avi explained, thankful that for the moment at least he did not have to re-live his own Lebanon teenage “trauma”.

This eerie presence of a violent past registered in reactions to the July 12th kidnappings, shaping current events that were fraught with anxiety and apprehensive citizens wondering where all this would lead, and longing, like Olmert, for a state capable of protecting them against “external violence” and providing their “personal security” (Aluf Benn and Yossi Verter, *haaretz.com* interview 03.10.2006).



Figure 7: special report image on www.ynetnews.com

Hizbullah's daring offensive came as a shock to many people previously focussed on the saga of kidnapped soldier Corporal Gilad Shalit in Gaza, and the fractured negotiations for his release. The voices of Israeli officialdom met the Hizbullah attack with anger and aggression, finding fault with the Lebanese government and promising a “restrained” but “very painful” response (Ehud Olmert in Sofer, *ynetnews.com* 12.07.2006). There are no partners for dialogue this time, came the now-familiar government declarations, as various ministers and generals pushed for a decisive and strong-handed military response. Thus the phrase “sending a clear message to the Hizbullah” was instinctively read as “referring to bombs not words”. Communication in this case became a by-word for violence and war (Katriel 2006: 12).

Within 24 hours Israelis found themselves in the midst of an all-out war-without-a-name, called anything but a war by a government keen to mobilize the armed forces but reluctant to invoke war-related compensation for its citizenry. Influenced by the confident claims of its Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz - a former air force pilot - the cabinet suspended plans for a widespread ground incursion in favour of aerial attacks, and by July 13 Israel was busy bombing runways at Beirut airport, besieging Lebanese ports and shelling Shi'ite neighbourhoods to the south of the capital. Yet as

we will see, the projection - though it proved to be an illusion - of a strong, belligerent and protective state served only to provoke the physical and social reverse, leaving communities open to attack and producing profound fear and public anxiety. Dozens of Hizbullah missiles (mostly 122mm *Katyusha* rockets) began raining into northern Israel as Israelis hunkered down for what was to become a long, hot summer of war.

Double-edged sword of security

The Israeli state's adoption of hostilities in the name of security and protection quickly brought violence on its own citizens. In this context, the violent measures taken in order to protect citizen-subjects also created disorder, fear and more violence. Protection, as Charles Tilly points out in his seminal article on European war-making and state-making, possesses two contrasting connotations (Tilly 1985). While states should be apprehended as providers of protection, this protection is "double-edged" (Tilly 1985: 170). The comforting understanding of the term "calls up images of the shelter against danger provided by a powerful friend, a large insurance policy or a sturdy roof" (Tilly 1985: 170). The other more ominous connotation conjures "the racket in which a local strong man forces merchants to pay tribute in order to avoid damage – damage the strong man himself threatens to deliver. The difference (between the two), to be sure, is a matter of degree" (Tilly 1985: 170). Tilly compares state-making with organised crime in the sense that states often stimulate the very threats or violence against which they claim to protect (Tilly 1985: 171). States, Tilly argues, should be understood as agents perceived to provide some degree of protection from internal and external threats. Yet crucially, the threats against which states claim to protect may be imaginary or the outcome of its own activities. In this sense a state may also be a protection racket (Tilly 1985: 171).

Israel provides an interesting case in point, with a protective paradox immanent in the very foundations of the Zionist, state-making movement. Twentieth century Zionism claimed a State of Israel was necessary in order to secure the Jewish people

after centuries of European persecution and vulnerability, from Russian pogroms in the late 19th century to the death camps of Nazi Germany. The safety and security of the Jewish people was seen as contingent on creating a nation-state of their own (see for example Boyarin 1994, Elon 1971, Ezrahi 1996, Kimmerliang 2001, Liebman and Don-Yehiye 1983, Paine 1993). Yet the very creation of the State of Israel, the various conflicts with Arab nations and ongoing hostilities with indigenous Palestinians has reversed this promise of protection and made Jewish-Israelis a target of attack. Despite the signing of official treaties with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) the perception of existential threats and regional vulnerability, of being boxed in by hostile nations and peoples who would rather see the end of Israel than sign up to peace gives rise to very real anxiety and fear. The rhetoric and practice of security may paradoxically produce more insecurity – a theme that runs throughout this thesis.

While this may be the case, all these hostilities, conflicts and violence have helped elevate “the exigencies of national security to a level of unquestionable truth” (Yiftachel 2006: 108). Israel appears to have a near monopoly on the notion of “security” in the region, appearing and reappearing as a core component of any dealings with the Palestinian Authority and political rhetoric around potential peace talks. Security and protection may be the goal but they are rarely the reality. Incidents such as the war with Hizbullah, charges of political corruption, sexual philandering, and allowing a convicted rapist to once again roam the country’s streets suggest that the state itself both produces the danger through its own intransigence and is often incapable of providing a protective shield against the insecurities it invokes. Just when the state is called upon to provide protection it appears as incapable and incompetent or even as the very cause of danger and insecurity. Communities of critique sat around the coffee kiosk revealed the racketeering side of the protective state, its incompetent invocations of violence and danger, yet, as we shall see, simultaneously re-created the commitment and desire for Tilly’s first comforting and capable sense of the term. It is not the threat that is at stake in all these conversations and critiques, the actual conflict or the likelihood of being attacked, so much as the idea of the state itself and its doubtful double-edged

capacity to protect. Notions of the protective state arose in profound anxieties over its very absence and the apprehensions of ordinary citizens seemingly abandoned by broken promises of the Weberian ideal; a strong, secure State of Israel that is constantly hoped for but continuously deferred, lying just out of reach or just over the horizon.

Day Seven: July 16

"Tel Aviv told to be on Rocket alert" (ynetnews.com 16.07.2006)

Following the deaths of eight Haifa residents on rocket attack, Home Front Command calls on Tel Aviv residents to be prepared for same.

Hanan Greenberg, ynetnews.com 16.07.2006

Here in Tel Aviv the situation is relatively calm, albeit grim and angry. While people in the north sit in their bomb shelters, those of us in the centre can do little more than check the news every five minutes.

Shai, *A New Reality* 18.07.2006

When the kidnapping took place and Olmert's claims that Hizbullah would "pay a dear price for their actions" turned into full scale war-in-the-north I was away, hiking in New England. I spent hours watching and reading the news, clicking onto Israeli websites for the latest updates and information, anxious about friends and apprehensive about conducting research from such a distance. It was not until I spoke with people on the telephone and a few days later returned to Tel Aviv, that I realised they were engaging in exactly the same activities as me in a bid to connect and keep pace with the conflict raging a couple of hundred km away, "It is so bad. I am just checking ynet every five minutes" Tali confessed over the telephone, working in her Israeli film office in Tel Aviv with one eye almost constantly scanning the online news.

With the north of the country under daily rocket attacks, Tel Aviv was told to be “alert”, and as far as I could gather this simply meant keeping abreast of the news. People’s behaviour hardly constituted a leap into anxious activity. Reactions to the state of “alert” and the government’s “emergency situation” instruction booklet that arrived in our mail boxes one morning bearing the super-patriotic slogan “strong in the rear, victorious at the front”, ranged from blasé to downright dismissive. People seemed more concerned about keeping their own “rears” in front of the television news, “Be ‘alert’, what does that mean anyway?” wondered my neighbour Michal, stroking her dog and nibbling a sandwich at the kiosk. In our apartment my flatmate Avi neglected to pay the pamphlet the slightest bit of attention and it eventually found its way under a pile of my research papers.

Although people were shocked by the actual snatching of the two soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, there seemed little surprise that Israel had come under attack and was once again at “war”. There was almost a sense of inevitability about it, the idea or expectation that this round of hostilities were bound to break out with Hizbullah, with the Palestinians or with some Middle East enemy sooner or later. Oscillation between war and peace, crisis and relative normalcy is deeply embedded in Jewish-Israeli perception and sentiment, reaching back to older religious and secular Zionist notions of exile, or persecution and redemption through which the founding of the modern State of Israel marks the apotheosis of salvation and rebirth.

Such concepts and sentiments incorporate more immediate conflicts that have coloured recent Jewish-Israeli experience from independence through the present day (Boyarin 1994, Paine 1983, Handelman 2004). Each of Israel’s conflicts: six wars, two Palestinian uprisings and this confrontation with Hizbullah by Israeli calculations, is characterised as an existential war of self-defence. This conflict, although more a “war” of choice than survival, like the others required a shift from calm to crisis, the mobilization of citizens and, as we will see, a large measure of commitment. Yet this latest “crisis” also seemed quite ordinary; an almost inevitable swing of the pendulum. This is Baruch Kimmerling’s characterisation of Israel as an “interrupted system” (Kimmerling 1985) or what Meira Weiss calls “crisis-cum-

routine” (Weiss 1997) whereby the threats and conflicts that Israelis repeatedly face become normalised and expected, and through which society routinely mobilises onto a “crisis footing” for war (Handelman 2004: 141). Indeed, Don Handelman suggests that this kind of oscillating modality introduces a “circular inevitability into the relationship between crisis and normalcy” (Handelman 2004: 141). However, reactions and conversations around the kiosk reveal less of a swing from one extreme to another – even when Tel Aviv came under the threat of attack - enabling us to glimpse the rather ordinary and often mundane ways in which various “crises” were lived out by Tel Avivians calmly talking, arguing and criticising within their public sphere. A sense of routine and the ordinariness of conflict run through following kiosk conversations, Tali’s constant news scanning, and Michal’s musings over the meaning of our emergency pamphlet, as well as speculations about “crises” or conflicts to come.

Once the conduct of the war came under question during the following days the pamphlet’s “strong in the rear, victorious at the front” slogan provoked nothing but snide remarks. As we will see, the state proved itself incapable of or unwilling to protect and provide for its “rear”, making a mockery of its own motivational motto. And, as a harbinger of things to come, the government’s wartime actions soon failed to live up to its bombastic claims. “The slogan rings hollow” cried a Ha’aretz editorial (haaretz.com 04.08.2006), chastising the state for abandoning its citizens to their wartime fate.

People lived out the war (largely rocket attacks on northern towns, IAF incursions and special unit raids into Hizbullah controlled southern Lebanon) through media relations, with newspapers, in coffee shop conversations, in front of TV sets in living rooms, gyms and corner stores, listening to radio reports and clicking on internet sites. Indeed, in this sense the “war-with-no-name” is probably much the same as many armed conflicts, from Belfast to Baghdad, from Rwanda to Ramallah. For those outside the violent epicentre the news becomes a principal means of keeping up-to-date and confirming the latest developments. Much more time is spent discussing editorial analyses and watching TV bulletins than it is shooting guns or

hiding in bomb shelters. And it took only a brief glance at some of the news websites and blogs to realise people all over the region, Palestinians and Lebanese, Jordanians and Israelis, were engaging with the conflict in the same “everyday” way, watching television, discussing the news, and debating politics. In other words, it becomes necessary to lure our anthropological lens away from the explosive violence of conflict, the blood and the battles that are never far from the headlines and explore more mundane ways in which those headlines and conflicts are created, critiqued and lived out (Kelly 2008). This is the public sphere of kiosk conversation over newspapers and coffee, discussions on the couch in front of the evening television news reports through which experiences and understandings of the war, scandal and escape were perceived and played out.

So, while northern residents fled their homes or sweated it out in shoddy shelters, in Tel Aviv people became anxious spectators, producers and consumers of never-ending news. Summertime in the coastal city usually involves escaping out-of-sticky-humid-doors, but here we were bottoms on couches and eyes glued to the television screen. Friends found themselves still staring at flickering TV images well into the small hours, or clicking onto news websites at five-minute intervals, “I am just checking ynet all the time and people are dying” complained Tali on the telephone again, feeling like a kind of conflict viewer-voyeur.

In keeping with the trend Avi (my flatmate) and I became nightly news addicts. “I don’t feel like doing anything, I don’t feel like going out at night” he declared, welcoming me back into town with his wartime depression, and helping carry my bags into the apartment. And so we too sacrificed social lives and outdoor activity in favour of couch potato TV dinners and information overload. Our evenings and nights were often spent in the darkened *salon* (living room) sat in front of television channels saturated with news coverage of the conflict. With regular programming suspended indefinitely, television stations oscillated between live reports (intrepid windswept reporter in bullet-proof vest stands by northern border fence amid explosive sounds), panel debates (smartly dressed “experts” gesticulate in shiny studio), and human interest stories (stoic northern shelter-dwellers alleviate fear and

entertain themselves with cheery sing-a-long sessions). Continuity titles such as “*Yisrael Nilchemet*” (“Israel Fights”) appeared between programmes (Channel 2), and flashing “*adcunim*” (“updates”) providing up-to-the-minute news bulletins scrolled across the bottom of our screen (Channel 10). At times there would be an “open studio” chat-show, entertaining us with a mixture of conflict related reportage, sage advice from the authorities, and the occasional musical interlude – stars and celebrities popping in to schmooze with presenters, swap their personal wartime stories and sing something uplifting or inspirational.

The daily rounds of television watching acquired the pattern of routine, beginning with a brief chat about our respective days;

Me: *How was your day?*

Avi: *Yeah, it was alright. As good as can be expected.*

Soon fizzling out into sighs, and replaced with silent staring at reports of injured Israeli soldiers and traumatized northerners, or shouting in alarm at the TV and at one another across the coffee table or from room to room;

Avi (from kitchen where he is making tea): *Do they say anything about the pilot? How many?* (News just in tells of an IAF helicopter that has come down in Southern Lebanon).

Me: *Just that there were no combat soldiers on the helicopter.*

Avi: *So!* (storming back into the room) *They always say what there is not. But what happened? No dead, okay. But kidnapped?!*

Moving on to full blown frustration at the political and military top brass;

Avi: *Why were there no plans! Why did they not give enough training?*

And ending, ultimately, in a volley of angry fist shaking and Arabic curses;

Avi: *kus’EMEK!*

Before finally, going to bed.

The following day we discussed these nightly reports and news-related rants with friends, neighbours, colleagues and informants. At the kiosk coffee became a predominantly sombre affair, conducted amongst the detritus of daily newspapers, “did you see Olmert in the paper today?” asked one neighbour, “Look what the Army

says now...tut!” exclaimed another, with Army Radio (rather than the habitual music selection) providing a constant conflict-background to customer conversations. The usually relaxed and jovial group efforts to complete the Ha’aretz newspaper’s Friday quiz gave way to tense disputes over military tactics or home front disasters. Even these were routinely interrupted with a “Shh! Let’s listen to the news” from Hadas.

Alongside their daily chats with friends over coffee, acquaintances at the corner store and strangers at the bus stop, many people also got in on the journalist act themselves, blogging online about the trials and tribulations of being a Tel Avivian in wartime, soldiers telling stories from the front, people talking back to news articles, or tapping away on laptops from the confines of *miklatim* (bomb shelters) in the “rocket plagued” north, telling first hand tales of shelter life as *Katyushot* fell overhead (ynetnews.com 13.08.2006):

11AM, I just went to sleep. A siren unsurprisingly starts, you knew it would. Well maybe this time I won’t go down, come on what are the odds. Fine, even if we do get hit, that’s the only way you are getting me out of this bed.

One minute later, down in the bunker where few people came down. In the distance you hear a faint boom, you’ve heard booms in the past once or twice. Then again, boom, louder. 1,2,3, BOOM, BOOM. 1,2, Boom. (Those booms better stop getting louder, on the last two you could feel the vibration from the wall). Boom, they are getting fainter now. Final boom in the distance (*Live From a Bunker* 23.07.2006).

Online conversations were even struck up between Israelis and Lebanese chatting away in cyberspace as war erupted around them.

The flow of individual and media mood swings rose and fell with the hours, beginning with bellicose and belligerent morning optimism, enormous headlines boasting of overnight operations, the courageous exploits of elite commandos, or airborne sorties dropping tons of explosives on *Katyusha* rocket launching “terrorist” cells, doubtless meant to buck up motivation and morale. This gradually gave way to midday reality checks and military stalemates, wounded soldiers and operational setbacks. And, as it became clear that the Hizbullah leadership had survived to fight another day, *Katyushot* (of *Katyusha*) began flying into northern Israel and the IAF

unleashed its superior fire power, pounding and pulverising suspicious Lebanese locations. Until, finally, a deceptive early evening calm ensued, only to be broken abruptly by barrage after barrage of rockets raining down across northern Israeli towns. Dejected, we'd retire for an evening of television analysis and the cycle of military manoeuvres, media reports and our own conversational commentary resumed.

Monday: 81 rockets hit north, 50 hurt.

Rockets land across Galilee Monday afternoon. Two civilians moderately to seriously injured in Ma'a lot; five hurt in Tiberias. Some 50 people hurt by rockets since morning.

Ahiya Raved, ynetnews.com 24.07.2006

Media and the public sphere

Such daily conversations and communications with and around various kinds of media formed the public spheres through which public sensations and major events were experienced.

In general, questions and examinations of media have tended to focus on the content a particular medium carries and conveys with the assumption that a medium is a "neutral delivery system" (Meyrowitz 1985: 15). Such a perspective frames media in terms of the effect or function of a text, a message or content, rather than a practical social interaction. Rather than exploring the media – books, newspapers or television – and the environments in and through which they are experienced, the overwhelming emphasis of "media studies" has been on these textual characteristics of the medium. Indeed much of the war-time, scandal-time, and escape-time conversations around the neighbourhood kiosk were sparked by someone's interest in a particular newspaper argument or television report, but it is largely the media milieu that concerns me here – discussion and debate took place in actual social interactions in and around media as social relations and not simply the dissemination

of texts. Therefore my concern is less with the media themselves and more with the mundane part they played in communities of critique, the ways in which those articles, headlines and reports, events and conflicts were lived out, by people checking the latest military developments, arguing over a minister's statement or listening to radio reports from the "frontline".

Early attention to media technologies led Marshall McLuhan to argue "the medium is the message" (1995 [1969]), suggesting it is the media context or environment, not the content that affects and shapes social life. The real "message" is to be found in "the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (1995 [1969]: 9). Benedict Anderson's analysis of the spread of nationalist consciousness for instance, is founded on the invention of the printing press, although his concern lies less with the actual content of books and pamphlets and more with the potentialities of moveable mass produced print (Anderson 1983, Askew and Wilk 2002). It is this suggestion stemming from McLuhan's work, that media are part of and help produce particular social contexts or environments as opposed to simply acting as relayers of information that is reflected in the media relations and daily conversations of my own neighbours and informants.

However, some of the earliest academic analyses of media attacked the mass culture of media, and though concerned with the very nature of the medium, arguably criticised the message or content by critiquing the messenger (Roberts 1999). Media were framed as communicative distributors of texts with the power to shape the popular attitudes and ideas of the time. In the US, the anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker traced what she called the totalitarian socio-economic structure of 1940s Hollywood movie production whereby the visions of the thousands of workers required on any movie set were often subsumed by the cinematic vision of a single studio dictator (Powdermaker 1950). Powdermaker argued that this social structure twinned with the industry's powerful profit motive "mechanizes" creativity, producing dehumanised and formulaic movies that forced empty dreams onto passive audiences, lulling them into aesthetic acquiescence (Powdermaker 1950: 318). Meanwhile, at approximately the same time Frankfurt School scholars Max

Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno were putting together their theory of mass media culture as a “hypodermic” process through which the content of a medium is absorbed directly – like the content of a syringe - by unreflexive audiences (Horkheimer and Adorno 1977: 361, Askew and Wilk 2002). Such analyses assumed both the deleterious nature of the textual message and its production of an undifferentiated, passive population. Nothing mediated between the audience and their direct consumption of the mass media message.

Subsequent work taking up this idea of media as powerful shapers of attitudes and ideas in the field of media and cultural studies, largely rests on Stuart Hall’s influential “encoding/decoding” formulation (1980[1973]). Where audiences were once assumed to be passive dependents James Curran notes a shift towards “semiotic democracy” (1990) and David Morley a turn from audience passivity to activity (Morley 1995). From the mass culture thesis of Adorno and Horkheimer comes a central concern with active audience responses and interpretation. Hall’s work argued for the investigation of meanings encoded within media texts together with audiences’ varying and variable abilities to decode or “read” them; the codes through which audiences actively appropriated, received and interpreted media texts. “Meaning”, Hall argued, “can never be firmly fixed”, offering an analytical alternative to the passive, static and homogenizing model of the Frankfurt School. His arguments transformed audiences into active agents and run through a raft of overwhelmingly televisual and cinematic anthropological analyses (see for example Mankekar 1993, Liebes 1984).

Katz and Liebes’ ethnographic study of cross-cultural responses to the TV show *Dallas* is an example of this reception oriented approach (Katz and Liebes 1990). They take up the various readings and meanings of *Dallas* to Moroccan, Russian, Israeli and Japanese viewers through their retelling of episodes. Yet the text or episode narrative remains squarely at the centre of analysis placing readers and readings along Hall’s reception continuum running from acceptance to resistance or rejection of encoded meanings. Such textual accounts position the subject as an

individual “reader” concerned primarily with the reception and interpretation of an article or programme and little else.

In another reception-centred study Purnima Mankekar analyses the responses of viewers to programmes on the Indian National network positioning her mainly female informants as critics or “readers” of texts rather than more casual watchers of television enjoying snippets of screen time amongst other daily activities. For Mankekar viewers’ profound emotional engagement, reception and reading of the televisual text “spurs them to introspection about themselves and their lives” their experiences and dominant social discourses (Mankekar 1993, 2002). In this sense viewers’ responses to the disrobing of the heroine Draupadi in a televised episode of the Mahabharata epic compels Mankekar’s informants to confront the gendered constructions of Indian womanhood and theorise their own “emotional, financial and sexual vulnerabilities” (Mankekar 1993: 479). Criticism is confined to the textual position of reader, neglecting the more mundane aspects of TV viewing and leaving us wondering whose agenda is reflected – the viewers’ or Mankekar’s own - what other interpretations or media related activities Mankekar’s viewers engage in.

Such textual accounts leave no room for arguments over the channel changer, heated exchanges over or with a particular programme, sharing morning coffee and sections of the newspaper with neighbours, or debates sparked by the latest headline. “Textual determinism” as Ien Ang (1989) argues, positions the viewer or reader as a cerebral prisoner of the text, obscuring all the social practice that goes on around and with watching the news or reading the newspaper.

Elizabeth Hahn moves away from the narrow focus on audiences in terms of their “reading” of and relationship with media texts (Hahn 2002). Her ethnographic exploration of Tongan cinemagoers approaches cinema practices and audience responses within a wider world of Tongan performance, entertainment, *faiva* (dance, music, poetry), oratory and storytelling. Tongan public performances traditionally require a person to act as narrator, directing and commenting upon the performance for audience members. Hahn shows how Tongan moviegoers similarly required

narrators to comment on the characters, behaviour and dialogue on the screen, rendering the text comprehensible to a Tongan audience and pertinent to a Tongan world, bringing traditional performative norms into the cinema and turning going to the cinema into a highly public and local event (Hahn 2002). Audiences in turn participated in the public performance, engaging with the characters on screen, offering advice, cheering on their heroes, and warning them of impending danger or doom. While Hahn's work brings all the activities of viewing to the fore, the shouts and banter that are part and parcel of the Tongan tradition of going to the movies, her focus remains text-centric to a large extent, focussing on what Tongans bring to their engagements with the cinematic text, reading and responding in the context of a peculiarly Tongan public performance.

Analysis, as I have suggested, must also pay attention to the contexts and not merely the content of media. And, as Simon Roberts (1999) argues, a space for anthropology opens up at precisely the point where textuality fails to capture the social contexts of which media is a part and where communicative environments and social relations unfold. His own ethnography of television culture and social change in Varanasi, India, captures TV's place within the daily weave of domestic life, from family relations and dinners in front of the screen, to discussions over television dowries and ways in which the set exists as "another member of the family" (Roberts 1999). In Tel Aviv kiosk discussions and conversations were part of daily and neighbourly ways in which events were perceived and played out. Sometimes they involved reactions to a particular text but more often than not articles, radio bulletins or last night's TV shows simply sparked opinions and discussions that wandered from topic to topic – What were the numbers of casualties? Was the chief of staff capable? Was the army well equipped? - were fluid, produced in interaction with media and one another, and changed over time. The newspapers, televisions and radios were not just mechanisms whereby audiences received texts to decode, interpret, negotiate or resist, but part of the social fabric of the public sphere, the communities of critique through which events concerning national and personal security were construed and lived out.

Israelis are well known consumers of news media, they are supposed to be up-to-date with political affairs and developments. The 2006 Israel Democracy Index suggests 82% of Israelis listen, read or watch the news several times a week (Arian, Aitmor and Hadar 2006). Yet I knew plenty of people who deliberately avoided the news, did not read the paper or engage with national affairs because news of political deals or life in the Palestinian territories or the latest round of hostilities was too depressing or difficult to face on a daily basis. My intention here is not to make some general point about Israeli news habits, rather during the “war”, the scandal and the escape everyone I knew and strangers I met became avid consumers of news. Reading and watching and listening to news formed the foundations of discussion and debate; this was how such momentous events were engaged with and experienced. Indeed, if I didn’t follow the news for a day I felt out of the loop when my neighbours and kiosk customers were discussing the latest military developments or political press releases and their own lives and opinions as a reflection of it. References to the latest events were picked from the pages of the newspaper or the last radio report, sparking conversation and critique.

Such news relations were not a one way track from newspaper article or TV programme to a receptive reader or individual but tacked back and forth between the two. As often as discussion arose out of news reports or televised footage, I would open the morning paper or website version to find columns and articles echoing conversations and opinions exchanged at the kiosk the previous day. Journalists came from the same populations, and presumably engaged with the same public spheres, privy to and part of the same discussions, debates and conversations as everyone else. Media and the public sphere became mutually constitutive, as much as discussion digested the news headlines of the day they also created a form of “public opinion” influencing the news agenda and argument. As such the news is not the central object of my analysis – it was already analysed by a critical citizenry for whom media and critique appear an ordinary mode of relation to “crises” of the state and security – but an essential part of how these exemplary events were lived and experienced. The public alarm, argument and anxiety produced by journalist’s reports, circulated in the city by citizens discussing those reports and by critical

conversations that then re-appeared as news articles, generating atmospheres animated by hype, scandal, and sensation. In this sense Yael Navaro-Yashin's (2002) "culture of news" in the making of political life in Turkey is much more helpful in considering relations between media flows and "communities of critique" (Wedeen 2003). The news provides a means of evoking the critical conversations through which the "double-face" of protection was revealed and reproduced on a daily basis, along with the national and security events, newspaper articles, TV conversations and narratives which brought them to the fore.

Day Eight: July 17

"A national consensus in Israel" ? (Rosenberg, Today's Situation 17.07.2006)

There is a general and genuine national consensus in Israel in favour of delivering a crushing blow to the Hizbullah.

Rosenberg, Today's Situation 17.07.2006

The government's hasty decision to go to war received the overwhelming support of the Israeli public, with commentators and army generals promoting the 'perfectly logical' right of Israel to defend its internationally recognised borders. Public and, for the most part, media opinion rallied behind the "no choice" ("*ain breira*") theory espoused by political and military elites; that having quit Lebanon down to the last millimetre in 2000, Hizbullah's renewed hostilities constituted nothing short of an act of war, leaving Israel with no option but to defend itself and destroy the ethno-religious militia. The kidnappings and attacks were quickly elevated to a question of national survival and violence as the only viable solution.

Military ethos

Uri Ben-Eliezer suggests that Israelis' perspectives in the face of conflict and government actions are the product of a longstanding and deep rooted military ethos

that privileges military action and force as the only “no choice” solution to threat or aggression against the state (Ben-Eliezer 1995). Baruch Kimmerling first raised this question of “cognitive militarism” – arousing a great deal of controversy amongst Israeli academics – suggesting that society is characterised by modes of thought and practice in which security considerations predominate (Kimmerling 1993). The centrality of the armed forces in Israel can be linked to its critical role in the struggle for independence and subsequent project of nation-building, the eruptions of war and near constant skirmishes that shape both the institutions of the state and the experiences of Israeli citizens (Azarya and Kimmerling 1984, Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999, Erlich 1987, Horowitz and Lissak 1989). Militarism is expressed structurally or institutionally and socially by such practices as attending reserve duty in the army, passing through security checks and government land appropriations. School kids compete for the most prestigious combat units when it comes to military service, fathers, sons and brothers are called up for annual reserve duty, and political careers are most often founded on a strong military career. The credibility and capacity of the state, as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber and most recently Charles Tilly remind us, rests on government’s ability to monopolise and mobilise violence (Tilly 1985: 171). The Israeli state is no exception, expected to act aggressively and effectively against any enemy, not simply to retaliate but to make sure they get the retaliation in first, to be on the safe side and ensure the enemy knows what is what. People’s initial supportive reactions and belligerent responses to the “war” must be apprehended with an appreciation for these central aspects of military matters and militarism within Israeli society.

Yet as the following critiques and comments reveal, the centrality of military considerations and a strong consensual commitment to things military and military action run through less static, structural and overtly military processes, through the changing social relations and heated debates of the public sphere, through citizens sitting at the coffee kiosk, giving Hebrew lessons and watching TV. Ideas, perspectives and practices to do with the military are not confined to the realms of military service, the war room decisions of government and generals or battlefield tactics, but emerges in other more domestic or civilian/cosy spaces and spheres. And,

as conflict progresses and discussion turns to neighbours and friends being called up for armed combat, I retake the reins of military and militarism in more detail.

In front rooms and corner shops we watched television cameras focussed on deserted northern streets, families forced to take refuge from rocket attacks, and the individual suffering of those who had lost relatives or seen homes go up in *Katyusha*-smoke. TV shows and panel debates filled with a parade of generals and ex-generals, displaying their mettle and steadfast determination (known locally as *nehishut*) with impressive bravado (Katriel 2006).

The campaign would be short, sharp and over in a week so the generals and politicians claimed. Current Chief of Staff Dan Halutz threatened to “set Lebanon back 20 years” (ynetnews.com 13.07.2006), Vice Prime Minister Eli Yishai proposed turning south Lebanon into a “sandbox” (haaretz.com 30.07.2006), and the mass circulation tabloid Ma’ariv covered its pages with the declaration that “Israel is strong” (Ma’ariv 07.2006). In an extreme example of jingoistic fervour Yoav Limor, a Channel 1 military correspondent proposed a parade of Hizbullah prisoners in their underpants “to strengthen the home front’s morale”. Street signs bearing the Israeli flag promised victory and encouraged everyone to unite behind the military campaign. The initial official goal of the Israeli government: to force the Lebanese government in Beirut into disarming Hizbullah. Failing that, the IAF would drive out Hizbullah itself, and with any luck assassinate the movement’s leadership in the process.

Yet the realities of day-to-day experience were far more complex than any claims of “no choice” or “national consensus” could convey. Despite the climate of propaganda and patriotism a few people wondered about the strategic and moral wisdom of launching into an immediate war. A tiny minority; a mixture of peaceniks, Arab groups, Women’s groups, young and old, protested in regular, though relatively small marches through the centre of Tel Aviv. Some, like Avi, yelled at the nightly TV news. Others simply struggled to traverse the minefield of emotional family relationships at a time when everyone holds their own, fierce point of view. Orna, a

friend, student and language tutor, turned up for one of our Hebrew sessions in July looking tired and drawn. She soon explained that she and her mother had argued over dinner the previous night and was now feeling “exhausted from it, so upset at this tension in the family”. The two of them had quarrelled about Orna’s father, his inability to discuss anything without making reference to politics, or these days the “war” in Lebanon, and her inability to criticise the conflict without invoking his wrath. “Some people say you cannot criticise the war while it is happening, while soldiers are fighting, but other people say *MA PIT’OM* (literally what suddenly, what on earth), you cannot wait until after; it is too late then!” she cried. For Orna, her friends, neighbours and acquaintances, criticism and a kind of Israeli “know-all presumptuousness”²⁶ quickly became commonplace (Sela-Sheffy 2004: 485). Doubts and criticisms began to seep into daily discussions and conversations around the news.

Such nuance barely registered at the level of political rhetoric or national news. Following week one of the war, Ma’ariv polled 90% of Israelis in favour of continuing the war against Hizbullah (21.07.2006). “We will win!” proclaimed Prime Minister Olmert, and within days bumper stickers reading “*anachnu nenetseach!*” printed in patriotic blue and white (the colours of the Israeli flag) began appearing on Israeli cars.

Such sticker slogans were not unprecedented social practice in Israel. During the February 2006 elections bumper stickers abounded, with party activists handing them out at traffic lights and street corners. It was not uncommon to see a vehicle with one or two stickers adorning the bumper or back window. There were pro-settler stickers, pro-peace stickers, pro-this and that stickers. Hagar Salamon (2001) has analysed bumper stickers in Israel as socio-cultural interpretation and folkloric phenomena, describing the “discourse of stickers” as an arena of popular political debate, inscribed onto the boots and back windows of citizen’s cars. Stickers were not

²⁶ Sela-Sheffy (2004) depicts this opinionated Israeli stereotype as one of several characteristics, popular idioms and folkloric witticisms of “Israeliness” gleaned from 295 anonymous responses to the question “What makes one an Israeli?” published weekly in the Weekend Supplement of Maariv between 1996 and 1998. It was also a common way in which Israelis referred to or characterised themselves during my time in Tel Aviv.

simply a one-off but sometimes initiated a series of slogans created in response to one another. Taking what he terms a particular “repertoire of stickers”, which began to emerge after the assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, Salamon draws attention to the interpretive acts that take place between the artist, the owner and the audience, eliciting the shared understandings and complex, often contradictory readings such sticker slogans evoke (Salamon 2001: 281).

In the case of “*anachnu nenetseach!*” the sticker tapped into this pre-existing social practice through which bumper stickers appear as a form of humorous and serious social commentary (Salamon 2001). And, as military fortunes changed so did its sentiment, quickly becoming an emblem of either support or cynicism depending on one’s own intention, interpretation or point of view. As Hizbullah proved rather more difficult to defeat or deter than the Air Force had anticipated and government goals shifted from early claims to obliterate Hizbullah to more pragmatic making do, what “consensus” there had been quickly turned to critique. Amid rumours of poor conduct and inadequate planning protocols Olmert’s “We will win!” the war was soon transformed into the satirical slogan of the conflict, moving outside the realm of rear windshields to adorn shop walls, window panes and advertising boards. One friend stuck it on her DJ booth, another on her kiosk door. As winning began to look less and less likely, “*nistapek betiko!*” stickers began to do the rounds, satirising Olmert’s original declaration that “We will win!” with their more modest suggestion that “A draw will do!”

All the noise; the hubbub of daily debates, news, television satire, conversations, stickers, newspapers and blogs struck the senses, demanding time and attention. Cries of “*Lo, lo le’milchama, ken ken le’shalom*” (No, no to war, yes, yes to peace) sounded in central Tel Aviv streets during the weekly protest marches. Goldwasser and Regev’s faces (the two hostage soldiers) soon stared out from small posters and giant billboards, and trolleys for donations to people stuck in shelters in the north appeared in the street corner store, quickly filling up with packets of *bisli* (peanut flavour puffs) and bottles of coke. There seemed to be no escape from this “culture of news” (Navaro-Yashin, 2002) no matter how hard one tried, and some of my informants certainly tried their best.

Kitsch IDF military band tunes from the 60s and 70s are the hallmark of my friend Hanna's cabaret-style DJ set, and usually a hit with her punters. Most weeks they inspire some dancing or a raucous sing-along in the small city centre bar where she performs, but during July 2006 the tunes were brought to an abrupt halt by a customer complaint. For some their light-hearted parody, patriotic militarism and sense of fun seemed out of sync with current events. Orna, my Hebrew teacher took to spending even longer hours working in her local café in a bid to escape the allure of the online newsflash, "I think I will stay here and study, if I go home I will just continue staring at the internet". Even the beach, that quintessentially Tel Avivian summer pursuit, offered little respite from the tensions of the time. I came home one evening to find Avi lying on the couch and watching the news as he did every Friday night after eating *Shabbat* dinner at his mother's place. Asking how his afternoon on the beach with his oldest friend Udi had been, he replied, "It was okay, I was at the beach and I could not relax at all. I began talking about this and this and **this!**", rolling both hands forward and raising his voice, "I couldn't help it. In the end a friend said 'okay, relax *k'ilu* (slang very similar to an American "like"), ENOUGH!" He smiled, offered me some popcorn (another Friday night staple) and turned back to the latest news report.

Day Ten: July 21

"Reservists forgo everyday life to return to Lebanon nightmare" ([haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com))

Israel masses soldiers and tanks on the Lebanese border, called up thousands of reservists...

Day-by-day: Lebanon Crisis – week two. BBC news 21.07.2006

Yesterday afternoon, dozens of men – young and not so young – were lounging in a Tel Aviv school, dressed in army uniforms, waiting to be called. Some read a book or newspaper, but most slept. After all, most had been awakened late last night by a telephone call in which a recorded announcement informed them that they had been served with an emergency call-up order (*tsav shmona*) for reserve duty.

Roni Singer-Heruti, haaretz.com 31.07.2006

Fuelled by fresh predictions estimating the campaign-span in terms of weeks, not days, rumours of a massive ground incursion began to circulate, and as an indication that current IDF initiatives were floundering the army called-up its reserve force. Most neighbours, if not immediately drafted into the reserve ranks, fretted over those friends and family who had received their *tsav shmona* (call-up orders), donned their military fatigues and left for the front. National military service is compulsory for the majority of Israelis (excepting ultra-orthodox *Haredi* Jews and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel). Men serve for 3 years from the age of 18, while women generally serve 2 (those in combat units serve longer). Following regular army service men continue to serve in the reserve forces until the age of 43-45, taking part in month-long training top-ups and active service once a year. However, it was no secret that in recent years the army had felt the pinch of the government's economic austerity policies, plunging the annual *miluim* (reserve duty) instruction into serious decline.

Those reservists returning to our tiny neighbourhood complained about shortfalls in training and equipment, inadequate preparation and plans. And while the media continued to report on confident army morale, their concerns would be echoed by others over coming weeks, "You know for the past few years they have been talking about reducing the army, turning the army into a smaller more professional army. But they did nothing, the reserves have been doing less and less training but they did not build the professional army. So now we are there, they call us up and we are wondering what do they want from us? What are we supposed to do?" wondered neighbour Ilan on his return from Lebanon, criticising shrinking military infrastructure and a lack of battle-ready reserves to a captive neighbourhood audience.

This was no longer a case just for the professional army; the security-state was calling its citizen's bodies into battle in an illuminating show of its more intimate mobilising power. Lives were put on the front line in the name of *bitachon leumi* (national security/defence) and meanwhile families waited and watched the news, their fears revealed in furrowed brows and strained conversation. Obsessive news-watching appeared to alleviate some of the anxiety, creating a climate of anticipation and uncertainty, fraught with desire to know what was going on, that ones loved ones were safe, and shot through with fear for what might be.

The traditional one-time idealised image of Israel as a “nation-in-arms”²⁷, tarnished by years of occupation, reared up from the past, rejuvenated by the present conflict. Militaristic allegiance emerged in public acceptance of the military call to duty, visible in the televised images of soldiers - in particular the tag-line “*Am Ha'Chayalim*”, “Nation of Soldiers” accompanying a Channel 10 montage of dusty, smiling and exhausted-looking troops - and evident in the exasperation of those left behind, “I mean I am glad they (the IDF) have not called me, but on the other hand I feel frustrated, like I want to do something. Now, I realise my age (laughs, he is 36), maybe I am too old, but I am not so old!” was Avi's way of explaining his own committed and conflicting feelings. As much as people critiqued the war, the politicians, the generals, for the poor strategies, lack of supplies and the abandoned citizens, they were committed to the cause. Protection was not simply a service to be supplied by a capable state, it emerged as a practice in which everyone was engaged.

Militarism and Commitment

Here it is worthwhile revisiting the military as a broader historical background and understanding in and to which claims and critiques in the conflict-filled present are made.

²⁷ For more on the notion of the “nation-in-arms” see Ben-Eliezer 1995; Ben-Ari and Lonsky-Feder 1999; Handelman 2004; Horowitz and Lissak 1989; Horowitz 1982, 1987; Luttwak and Horowitz 1975; Peri 1981.

Friends, neighbours and informants did not see soldiers as I would see a soldier for instance. In fact many were reserve soldiers and some of them, like the kiosk regular Ilan or my friend Tali's brother Eyal, would be called upon to drop their civilian lives, put on a uniform and head for the front.

Uri Ben-Eliezer describes the intertwining of nation-building, citizenship and military matters during the founding years of the Israeli state as a period when the Zionist ideal of making over the Jewish people was politically and popularly prominent (Ben-Eliezer 1995). Zionism, the late nineteenth and twentieth century ethno-territorial movement to re-root and secure the boundaries and bodies of the Jewish people in a particular Jewish space – eventually Palestine – was premised on the settlement of the land, the re-moulding and mobilising of immigrants from a variety of disparate socio-cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds, recreating a new nation (consciously re-imagined from the old), and forging an essentially secular, strong, highly modern and technocratic Jewish state (Ben-Eliezer 1995, see also Boyarin 1994, Elon 1982, Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983, Paine 1993). The project was based upon the dual negation and denial of anything and everything to do with the Jewish Diaspora²⁸ – all the weakness, insecurity and passivity of lives lived in exile and persecution – and all associations with the perceived chaos and inherent inferiority of the Arab Middle East (Dominguez 1989, Kimmerling 2001, Rabinowitz 2002, Raz-Krakotzkin 1993, Yiftachel 2006). Never again would the perceived passivity, the genocide and humiliation of European experience be allowed to happen, from now on a fighting Jewish nation would take war to the enemy. And at its centre was the construction of a “new Jew” – an “ever ready settler-fighter who conquered the land with his physical strength and endless poetic love” (Yiftachel 2006: 61).

“There is nothing more important, more precious and more sacred than the security of the state” proclaimed Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, but a secure

²⁸ Specifically the European or Ashkenazi communities, ignoring *Mizrachi* (North African and Middle Eastern) Jewish experience.

state does not simply come into existence as a juridical-legal entity with declarations of independence (May 14 1948)²⁹ (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983: 87). The people, the nation, had to be “imagined” and made over in order to construct and protect the state, “I see in these elections the shaping of a nation for the state because there is a state but not a nation” (Ben-Gurion on the 1951 campaign trail, Kafkafi 1991: 3). While much has been written on the formative and continuous creation of an Israeli (Jewish Israeli) “imagined community” or nation (Dominguez 1989, Elon 1981, Ehrlich 2003, Kimmerling 2001, Ram 2003), Ben-Eliezer’s analysis alerts us to how Israel’s early leaders may have sought to construct the state and citizenry through the military “the military was of the nation, the nation made into the buttress of the state” (Handelman 2004: 13, Ben-Eliezer 1995). The diverse Jewish population was turned into a nation-in-arms; a fighting nation (in the style of the 19th century Jacobin state) of professional soldiers and civilian reservists in and through which the business of the military and the security of the state was made the responsibility, preoccupation and preserve of the entire nation (Ben-Eliezer 1995). The boundaries between civil and military sectors were blurred, citizens would not simply be protected by the state but would “share in responsibility for the state’s security”, while “the ideas that war is not always the less-preferred choice and that peace is not always worth the price” was pre-eminent (Ben-Eliezer 1993: 275, 283).

The military came to be the community that embodies and shapes a sense of “Israeliness” (Helman 1997). As such the army was perceived as a “people’s army”, a family-in-arms, embodying an ethos of nationhood, camaraderie, voluntarism and labour, implying a kind of civil virtue and citizenship, a certain responsibility in relation to the state (Ben-Eliezer 1995). It is this combination of rational and emotional components, the family-in-arms, the collective care, obscuring the distinctions between civilian and military that runs through the conversations and communities of critique during the conflict with Hizbullah. Protection is more than Tilly’s double-edged formulation presumes, and implies a further sense in which

²⁹ Following years of struggle against British Mandate forces in Palestine (established after the First World War) and Arab rejection of the 1947 UN partition plan, Ben Gurion declared Israeli independence on the eve of the end of Mandate rule and emerged victorious following the subsequent 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

citizens, rather than expecting full protection are instead also called upon to protect the state themselves.

Critically Ben-Eliezer's historical analysis deviates from studies that stress how the nation-in-arms provides a practical "means to survive in a hostile environment" of conflict with the Palestinians and surrounding states (Horowitz 1987). The nation-in-arms was constructed as a means to legitimise the idea of solving problems by military means, by making military matters into the preoccupation of each and every person, the Israeli population was created "as a fighting nation, not for the sake of a liberal democracy but for the purpose of war" (Ben-Eliezer 1995: 284).

Such perspectives stress that security traditionally depends on the doctrine of "no choice" (*ain breira*) viewing force as the only option, coming together as one and shutting out dissent, that we saw re-emerge at the beginning of this "war" in Lebanon; the idea that the population must be a united, closed, (Jewish) collective, taking the war to the enemy. That Hizbullah had left Israel "no choice" but to retaliate with force. There was little room for non-Jewish Israeli or Lebanese experience, voices or opinions once the motif of the nation-in-arms re-emerges as an exclusively Jewish "family-in-arms" (Handelman 2004: 12). Of the many televised hours devoted to the daily violence very little time, conversation or comment was given to scenes from Lebanon. Israeli TV always reports its victims first – three killed on August 4th in *Katyusha* attacks and 2 soldiers killed in fighting – whilst the death of 30 Syrian workers in a Lebanese fruit factory hit by Israeli fire, was relegated to the bottom of the news agenda (Rosenberg, Today's Situation 04.08.2006). Images of war-torn south Lebanon or bombed Beirut were few and far between.

It was not only Lebanese suffering but Palestinian Arab voices in Israel that were absent from both daily discussions and media reportage, unless to point out the hypocrisy of Hizbullah attacks aimed at Haifa and other northerly mixed population areas, or when Arab citizens were killed by *Katyushot*. Writing in Ha'aretz Sayed Kashua described the difficulties of being a Palestinian Arab in Israel during wartime

and pitied those politicians and community leaders appearing on TV to represent “Arab” public opinion. “When they are asked, ‘So what does the Arab public think about the developments?’ the meaning is actually ‘admit it, admit you support Nasrallah, say you abhor the state you fifth column, you, every one of you’. There is no room here to be against the war as such, Hey, who are we kidding? Arabs have suddenly become pacifists? Vegetarians? Hey, tell us another one” (Kashua, ha’aretz.com 12.08.2006). When it comes to surviving the nationalistic climate of the current conflict he concludes angrily that “the best thing an Arab can do in wartime is shut up” (Kashua, haaretz.com 12.08.2006).

All of this civil militarism (Kimmerling 1985, 2001) and nation-in-arms mobilisation, citizen soldiers ready to fight and sacrifice for the security of the state, is, as any number of my informants would only be too quick to tell me, much less so today. The unequivocal rightness of the military is no longer an unquestioned aspect of Israeli society and the critiques and criticisms of kiosk customers also herald this questioning of previously undisputed assumptions held by state authorities and the majority of the population about military qualities, military behaviour, and “‘state security’ considerations as the only (or primary) criteria for national decision making” (Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999: 19-20). Citizens’ criticisms should thus also be read as part of a much wider reflection and interrogation taking place in Israeli society over the past decade or so, including the necessity or rightness of war, the role of women in combat, connections between families and military authorities, the causes of army suicides and the conduct and construction of military funerals and memorials (Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999).

Yet during these weeks of war in Lebanon and rockets in the north the images and practices of the nation-in-arms, uniting behind the boys at the front, the rhetoric of “no choice”, a preoccupation with the state’s security and all things military reappears and circulates in the eye of the Channel 10 camera lens, the general fears for reservists’ safety and in Avi’s contradictory feelings of relief at not being called up

and sense of responsibility to “do something”, as soon as “crisis looms” and the state is perceived as under threat (Handelman 2004: 15)³⁰.

What was at stake was not the threat posed by Hizbullah but the nation-in-arms, the protective pact of citizenry and state, the dual duty to protect on the part of many citizens but the condition and expectation that the state, the government, the military, will uphold its own responsibilities to protect, to provide capable leadership and civilian infrastructure, to shield citizens who are not fighting and to crush enemy forcers. There is no contradiction between feelings of deep commitment and critique. In fact critique came from a place of profound engagement with the idea and practice of the protective State of Israel. And, as we will see, when it comes to people’s responses to criticism from the international arena it is this committed engagement that gives one the right and the responsibility to be critique.

Sarah Helman’s work with reservists and conscientious objectors who refused to take up reserve duty during Israel’s Lebanon war in the early 1980s or later during the first *intifada*, reminds us of the normalcy of military service and its relation to belonging in Israel (Helman 1997, 1999). Military service, she suggests, particularly for Israeli males, means belonging to a “community of warriors”, which embeds a person in society, acts as a criterion of normalcy and provides entitlement to participate in civil society. Amongst her male informants participation emerges as the most important pre-requisite for opposition and critique. Although there are a minority of Israeli men who refuse military service altogether, legitimate dissidence and refusing to serve in the reserves relies on previous participation and involvement in the military community. Only the committed may legitimately critique when it comes to national security or military matters (Helman 1997, 1999). A similar sense of committed criticism permeated many kiosk discussions. And, the more the state appeared incompetent and incapable of protecting its citizens from the very violence it had invoked through its own military actions, the more critical kiosk commentaries became, filled with hopes and opinions about how things should be done.

³⁰ Don Handelman refers to a similar sense of the nation-in-arms in his analysis of Israeli reactions to the Versailles disaster in 2001 in which 23 Israelis were killed and hundreds injured when the floor of a reception hall – called Versailles – collapsed during a private wedding party (Handelman 2004: 13).

At the very moment when some people were busy fighting to protect the state and other people felt the need for security, citizens found the state incapable of providing protection. The rest of the time it seems not to matter, there are other personal and political priorities and preoccupations; the illusion of protection remains intact. It is these periods perhaps, periods of relative peace when people are more concerned with jobs, family, poverty, religious-secular strife and education, when national security is not top priority, that account for the general calm before the storm, for Tel Aviv life with its cafes, creative types and easy going ways, for the peaks and the troughs of violence and calm, for the exceptional and ordinary times. The rest of the time people simply get on with the daily business of life.

It is only at the very point of violence or when one is put under threat, when one needs the state to protect that one realises it cannot help, is ineffective and may even be the very cause of current insecurities, unable to act as either the “comforting” shelter against danger or even the “racketeer” who provokes the danger but, at a price, provides protection (Tilly 1985). The moment it is challenged it seems the protective illusion dissolves into incapacity and incompetence. The problems arrive when it becomes clear that the state cannot hold up its end of the protective bargain. Thus the significance of these critiques and criticisms is not just their ability to reveal an incapable, ineffective state, although this is a crucial point about protection. Rather, the criticisms are also about participating and defining a community of citizens in ways that invoke and incorporate past experience, commitment and involvement in the protective capabilities associated with the state.

As the call-ups continued reserves who once served as regular recruits in Lebanon (pre-2000), reflected on the sharp contrasts between everyday life and military conflict. This prospect of a return to Lebanon raised many an old “trauma”, half-forgotten horrors of army catering or communal showers, and the more serious spectre of the Lebanon war itself; “I was in the villages that the IDF is preparing to re-enter. We should not enter this hell. It is a death trap” film director Shmulik Ma’oz told Ha’aretz reporters (Pinto, haaretz.com 01.08.2006). A few column inches

were given over to reservist reports, capturing the concerns of those readying for the front; “You’re living an ordinary life, and suddenly you return to these conditions, which you thought you were done with already”, a reserve soldier told Ha’aretz reporters, “I also thought I was done with Lebanon. Who would have believed that we would return there? When I was a soldier it was our worst nightmare, and I was so happy when we left. It’s inconceivable that we’re going back again. Today, with the perspective of eight years since I was there last, I simply don’t understand how I dared to do what I did” (Roni Singer-Heruti, haaretz.com 31.07.2006). Such newspaper commentaries resonated with the emotions of those closer to home. Speaking over one of his customary espressos and several strong cigarettes at the kiosk Ilan described the contrasts between his former army service and current reserve experience, “You realise what you were capable of when you are young. When you do army service you don’t think about it, you just do it. You have all the training; you are brought up to be prepared for it. But guys my age now, now we are worried. We wonder how we could do it back then”.

Yet reports, quotes and anecdotes cannot really convey the more intimate long arm of the state. Reserves were not just type on a newspaper page, faces on television or informants for the neighbourhood anthropologist, but fathers, friends and brothers, bringing national security rhetoric, the historical imaginary of the nation-in-arms and newspaper headlines into sharp and intimate relief. When Tali’s brother Eyal, a veterinary student and reserve army medic received his *tsav shmona* she was so worried that she took time off work; “Yonatan (the youngest brother) is in touch with Eyal all the time. We are just hoping they stay on the border. I tell you, if they send him north I am going up there!” she cried over the phone. I found her sitting at home, seeking solace in cigarettes and cups of tea, monitoring the news at all times. As we sat chatting she kept one eye on the television screen, occasionally interrupting her flow to point out tired-looking soldiers or the odd terrified northerner, “He is up there now so we have no contact with him He can’t tell us anything. Look at them - poor things (nodding suddenly at the soldiers on the screen), they look like they can hardly walk...” she said.

Although we spoke at the time friendship trumped fieldwork and it was only afterwards that we really spoke in depth about Eyal's call-up for my research and she described the complex of emotions and experiences she endured that summer. Tali's story serves as an example as opposed to an exemplar, revealing the contrary and complex experiences of the conflict. Consensual and critical by turns, sometimes angry, sometimes accepting, telling of social responsibilities, emotional reactions and bodily responses evoked by that reservist draft, Tali's experiences provide a window through which we can glimpse something that goes beyond simply pointing out complexities to reveal an intimate intertwining of the state and individual, commitment and critique that summer. Here is what she had to say:

I felt anger – this isn't my war! You can't take him! I remember sitting at my parents' house on a Friday night, a lot of reserve soldiers had already been drafted and we didn't talk about it, but we all knew that the phone would ring eventually, it was inevitable. So there we were, watching the news and the phone rings and I picked it up and there's a recording (it's not even a human being, just a bleeding recording) saying Eyal Soffer blah blah blah must report to....and then I told my parents and the look on their faces..I'll never forget it. And my Dad saying that he fought enough wars for us all. And I didn't want to tell Eyal. He wasn't at home. We said to ourselves, they'll reach him, we shouldn't tell him so quickly. But of course after about half an hour he calls, telling my mum he has to leave that same night and can she prepare stuff that he needs, he'll come by and pick it up (he was in Haifa). And we said, no, we'll drive up there and get you the stuff. But he didn't want us to, he said that would make him feel as if we were on our way to say goodbye, that it would stress him out...and anyway, it was dangerous driving to Haifa, it was being bombed all the time...Anyway, I didn't want to make a scene, but I felt awful. I wanted to buy him a plane ticket, not that Eyal, with his sense of duty would ever agree...but that's what I wanted to do at that moment, smuggle him out of the country. So I went outside, called Hadar up on the phone and just cried my eyes out.

And it only got worse after that. Because they were sat at this base near the border and everyday it was like – I'm going in tonight, oh, no, in the end we're not going in. Every night. And I was glued to the TV. And every morning, after managing to get some sleep, I'd leap to the TV to see what happened at night. And it was terrible. Every night there were casualties...and Yonatan and my parents...my god. Every knock on the door made them jump out of their seats...because they just come to the door to tell you...and Eyal, he told me this after the war, but Yonatan and I discussed it during the time he was there, and we guessed this, he wasn't telling us everything, so as not to worry us. But he saw awful stuff. He's a medic, so they were taking care of... well, he was seeing unpleasant stuff. Luckily,

they never went in, they just stayed outside and helped, but it was too close, all the time.

I took quite a few days off work too. I couldn't concentrate on anything. And all I wanted was to switch places with him. To take his place. It's a stupid older sister sentiment I get about both of them no matter what, and it never makes sense, because it is Eyal who went through the proper training not me, but I always want to go through stuff for them, to protect them. And it was particularly strong back then....I know I keep saying I don't like Israel, but when it comes to stuff like this, well I don't really think that the reserve soldiers should have left the country and run away, because it just means someone else gets hurt. I don't agree with pretty much everything our government does, but I think that we live in a reality which demands we have an army and therefore, we all have to do it.

Like some of my informants, friends and neighbours Tali did not support the government's decision to go to war but felt a profound commitment to Israeli soldiers like her brother Eyal and a responsibility to share in protecting the Israeli people. Eyal is called up to serve in the reserves and protect the state. He keeps his unit's location to himself in order to protect his family from worrying too much. And his older sister Tali wishes she could take his place and protect him instead. Tali's telling of her and her family's feelings and anxieties as Eyal leaves for reserve operations in Lebanon, accepting his duty but dreading the knock at the door with news of his death, give a sense of the mix of personal emotions such events may provoke. The ordinary anxieties and cares of people living the conflict, watching events unfold on TV, taking days of work, worrying about loved ones and losing sleep. Tali's anger at a "war" she felt was not in her name, her anxieties as a sister whose brother is called up to fight, her feelings of protection towards him and her sense of responsibility and obligation to act illustrate a very visceral, committed critique.

Day 15: July 26

"Nine IDF troops killed in day of fighting" (Greenberg, ynetnews.com

26.07.2006)

Bint Jbeil I

Battles rage since morning hours in Hizbullah's south Lebanon "capital". Soldiers report short-range fire, face to face combat, setting off of explosives, and missile fire.

Efrat Weiss, ynetnews.com 26.07.2006

As the conflict continued and casualties grew people began to ask not only "why are we not winning?" but to question the game plans and war credentials of the commanding elite; "Why were there no plans? Why did they not give enough training?" Avi began to ask aloud. The television tacticians were now joined by armchair generals as anyone and everyone offered an opinion on operational shortcomings and strategic solutions. "Everyone is a general now", observed Gideon Levy writing in Ha'aretz at the end of July, "and they are mostly pushing the IDF to deepen its activities" (Gideon Levy, haaretz.com 30.07.2006). Conversations in cafes, at the falafel stand and market stalls resounded with political punditry, claims to know best or better, and arguments over whether to hold troops back or push forward for a decisive ground invasion, "I don't think the army had a proper plan of what to do. And this is the first time we have no military man as PM and no military man as Defence Minister,...and the chief of the Army is a pilot, he is from the air force: he doesn't know about moving troops" was Ilan's kiosk opinion, blaming the lack of military expertise amongst Israeli decision makers.

Ynetnews.com, the internet site for the Tel Aviv based daily *Yedioth Aharonoth*, proclaimed a "deadly day in south Lebanon" as IDF troops became bogged down in the village of Bint Jbeil. Having hailed a premature victory in the area the army fell victim to its own apparent complacency and was ambushed by guerrilla fighters. Hizbullah forces, branded "operatives" by some (Hanan Greenberg, ynetnews.com 26.07.2006) and "terrorists" by others (Efrat Weiss, ynetnews.com 26.07.2006), ambushed army units and sparked strident calls in the press for Israel to "level" all launch sites in Lebanon (ynetnews.com 27.07.2006).

Gradually tales of the war-wounded began to reach home. Avi for instance heard a former work colleague had been killed in battle but could not face finding out

anything more. And a couple of days later Tali received news that a friend had been hospitalized, “Yossi called to say Uri’s best mate has been injured, he is in hospital in Haifa. We were all friends at work and then I was Uri’s girlfriend so we all used to hang out together. I feel so bad for Uri; he is up there now with the family. Yossi and I want to go to see him but we might wait a while, there must be so many people closer to him that want to visit” she explained. Eran, a security guard informant working at a beachside bar learned about the injury of an IDF friend from the pages of his morning paper, “I just found out today, it is here in the paper!” he exclaimed, holding out a copy of Yedioth. “I’m going home, me and my guitar” ran the headline, showing a picture of a smiling soldier sitting up in a hospital bed, holding a guitar and surrounded by friendly faces. He had lost both his feet in the attack. “I wish they would call me right now so I could go kill some Arabs” Eran yelled in exasperation, waving the paper in the air as 3 IAF helicopters flew past us and headed northwards along the city shore.

Such seemingly meagre military gains and government incapacity combined with personal loss or injury sowed the seeds of critique, initiating a kind of commonplace critical commentary that rose to a crescendo as the conflict moved into a ferocious fourth week.

Hope and Doubt

Doubt and uncertainty continued to creep into conversations and dominate debate as people seemed unsure and uncertain, from the peacenik protesters to Orna’s military misgivings, reservist complaints, Tali’s anxieties about her brother, Eran’s anger, and the critiques of kiosk customers like Ilan over tactics, military know-how and political strategy. As the conflict progressed people began to doubt the protective capabilities and military capacity of the state, to critique and criticise the running of the “war”. As such, the hopes invested in the military campaign and political leadership to finish off Hizbullah once and for all, to finally secure the northern border and to protect northern citizens from rocket attack, began to dissolve into

anxiety and doubt about its ability to do so. As Ernst Bloch suggests, hope is a delicate dreaming forward, projecting vulnerable visions of a better life into an uncertain future, and as such always implies a measure of doubt (Bloch 1986, Crapanzano 2003: 18). Hope is not that far away from hopelessness, always on the cusp of doubt and despair. The two points touch so that doubt may also convey a measure of hopeful commitment. Communities of critique began to doubt and condemn the management of the conflict and through their own criticisms projected a hopeful protective vision of how things might or ought to be.

The question that inevitably arises is how such deeply felt commitment and nationalist sentiment can co-exist with critique? How are we to comprehend this peculiar mixture of profound critique about the incapacities of an un-protective state, the illusion of security and continued commitment to the idea of a protective, secure State of Israel? Why did neighbours accept the call to fight, commit to protecting themselves and their state, support military action in the name of security, invest in the idea of a protective state while criticising and revealing its incapacity and ineffectiveness, doubting its ability to protect at all? To begin with hope and commitment are not necessarily incompatible with criticism. Commitment does not preclude a degree of doubt, nor does it denote absolute conviction (Engelke 2005). Rather, doubt's etymological roots stem from the Latin *duo*, implying a double or dual meaning (Macgregor 1989). In this way doubt does not mean disbelief, but incorporates the sense of being in two minds. Moreover, Geddes MacGregor, writing about the role of doubt in Christianity, suggests that conviction and belief may actually be strengthened and maintained by a measure of doubt (MacGregor 1989). Hope and doubt, commitment and critique, may not be a contradictory dichotomy to be resolved but part of the same coupling or oscillating process.

As Ernst Bloch argues, doubt forms part of human desires and hopes for a better life (Bloch 1986). Just as one doubts the reality of security and the capacity of the state to protect one hopes for and is committed to a better future. This forward looking hope and desire is endlessly deferred, just over the horizon, and in turn quickly turns into despair and critique. Hope, as Vincent Crapanzano reminds us "can never be fully

divorced from hopelessness any more than hopelessness can be divorced from hope” (Crapanzano 2003: 17). Thus Tel Avivians’ hopes for an effective and protective state may become apparent and arise in the very absence of institutions and authorities capable of providing protection. Doubt, critique and realisation of deferral make manifest their hopes and claims for how the war should have been run, how the state and society should be. People may doubt the ability of the state to protect but remain committed to the idea of strong State of Israel reproducing the hope or desire for a state capable of protecting them in the very breach or absence of security. It is in this contact or cusp between hope and doubt that anxieties, apprehensions and critique emerge. As such hope and doubt are not two opposing sides of the protective state but rather its holding tension as citizens’ critical commentaries simultaneously reveal and reproduce the state’s protective (in)capacities.

Day 19: July 30

“Dozens killed in IDF strike” (Waked, ynetnews.com 30.07.2006)

At least 55 people, including 21 children, were killed after a three-storey building collapsed in the village of Qana in southern Lebanon. Lebanese media reported that the building, which serves as a shelter for refugees from southern Lebanon, was hit in an Israel Air Force strike. A senior IAF officer said that the Air Force has been striking the area for three days now following dozens of incidents in which *Katyusha* rockets were launched from the village and its surrounding areas, and that residents were warned to leave.

Ali Waked, ynetnews.com 30.07.2006

What I saw is, yes, Israel clearly disproportionately hit civilian targets, civilian infrastructure, which is in violation of humanitarian law.

UN’s emergency relief coordinator, Jan Egeland, *The Summer War in Lebanon*, BBC Radio 4, 03.04.2007, 04.10.2007

In a deadly déjà-vu at the end of July IAF shells killed dozens of Lebanese civilians sheltering in precisely the same village where, ten years earlier, a similar incident

brought *Operation Grapes of Wrath* to its knees amid a chorus of international condemnation. “Taking responsibility for the tragic bombing of the village of Qana doesn’t relinquish the justification of the war in general” wrote conservative columnist Sever Plocker (ynetnews.com 31.07.2006) as a fresh barrage of international outcry brought the question of “proportionality” to the forefront of animated and acrimonious public debate.

Lebanese PM Faoud Siniora denounced the incident, condemning “Israeli massacres in Lebanon”, Margaret Beckett the then-British Foreign Secretary called the attack “quite appalling”, adding that Britain had “repeatedly urged Israel to act proportionately” (haaretz.com 30.07.2006). “Unjustifiable action” declared French President Jacques Chirac, “criminal aggression” cried Jordan’s King Abdullah II (haaretz.com 30.07.2006), and “indiscriminate warfare” charged Ken Roth, director of Human Rights Watch (ynetnews.com 03.08.2006). Meanwhile Prime Minister Olmert admitted that he “regretted” the incident and imposed a 48 hour suspension of IAF activity but eschewed mounting international pressure for a ceasefire, telling northern mayors “We will stop the war when the (rocket) threat is removed...our captive soldiers return home in peace, and you are able to live in safety and security” (Schiff et al, haaretz.com 31.07.2006 my emphasis). In spite of seeming unable to do anything against the rocket attacks for the past 23 days the government’s protective proclamations continued.

Israelis, accustomed to news reports produced primarily for an internal audience and faced with an international media projecting images of bloody civilian corpses (Israel TV never shows body parts), began to look towards opinion elsewhere. Kiosk regulars asked me “So what are they saying over there?” anxious to comprehend news reports and public perception in the US and Europe, increasingly perplexed by the apparent double standard applied to Israel’s actions in the region, “Israel’s neighbours are not Sweden or Canada, but Syria and Iran” chimed Liav Orgad (ynetnews.com 03.08.2006) in a cynical swipe at Western duplicity. Indeed, for many people conflict is often experienced through the international as well as the national press. As such I was also brought into the critical fold, to provide an

explanation for outside opinions to a perplexed public sphere. Proportionality, so the theory went, was a luxury Israel could ill-afford, “Yes, we are responding out of proportion, because the threat Israel faces has no proportions” (General (reserve) Moshe Elad, ynetnews.com 03.08.2006).

Claims over proportionality and indiscriminate aggression conjured up for some Israelis the age-old failure of foreigners to understand their unique Israeli predicament. In a war where perception is everything, Israel seemed to be losing the battle for international public opinion. For some Israelis, watching Western media reports of the war, it seemed as if their suffering - one million forced to take shelter or flee to safety further south as rockets rained down - was ignored completely, whilst the suffering in Lebanon was covered to an extreme. Tom Segev, renowned revisionist historian and occasional column contributor, wondered whether decades of routine brutality and occupation in Gaza and the West Bank had inured Israelis to the pain of others (haaretz.com 03.08.2006). Thus, a conflict widely perceived as an act of self defence, a battle to retrieve hostages from Hizbullah and disarm the militia force in line with pre-existing UN resolutions, was portrayed abroad as “disproportionate”, generating familiar feelings of incomprehension and international isolation, of constantly fighting for survival, and all the attendant fears and existential angst, “It was like Rabin said, we never stopped fighting the war of independence, it never stopped” said Uri, a man I sat chatting to in Dizengoff Square one day, talking about the conflict as we waited to pick up our laundry.

According to many a comment and conversation Israel would always and inevitably be cast as the villain by the outside world ignorant of the lengths Israeli forces go to in order to forewarn, preserve and protect civilian lives. People thought other nations incapable of understanding the true nature of the threats facing Israel and the actions, the legitimate actions people were forced to take in order to protect themselves and their state. The outside world was deemed incapable or unwilling to comprehend Israel’s position, a country which even has a word, *hasbara* to convey its country’s public relations attempts to put an Israeli point of view across to an outside audience. From this perspective Europeans could afford to harp on about proportionality

because they did not have a hostile rocket-firing non-state “terrorist” organisation sitting across their border. Lebanon had failed to deal with Hizbullah so now Israel would have to, so the logic went. What seemed disproportionate to many Israelis was the scale and scope of international condemnation.

Many people simply failed to understand how heads of state could claim Israel was to blame for “innocent” deaths whilst Hizbullah hid behind a civilian population in order to fire rockets at random, “Israel warns civilians before attacking, Hizbullah deliberately attacks civilians!” cried Tali as we watched the rockets on TV. “And I am usually the first to criticize the government” she continued, “but this is ridiculous. Why are they saying Israel is responsible for all these civilian deaths? It is not Israel who is responsible, Hizbullah is responsible!”. Two days previously Time Out magazine had put its own satirical spin on the current hostage crisis, the human-shield debate and the perceived parody of proportionality in the international arena, publishing a cartoon showing a jubilant Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah (Hizbullah general secretary since 1992) speaking before a row of media microphones (Figure 8). “I just got into the Guinness Book of World Records for holding the biggest number of hostages ever: the entire nation of Lebanon!” the caption read.



Figure 8: Hassan Nasrallah: Time Out final week of July 2006

While some voices bemoaned Israeli losses to the media-savvy *Al-Manar* (the Hizbullah run satellite station ‘The Beacon’) in the *hasbara* (public relations/point-

of-view) battle of the air waves, others laid the blame on foreign policy machinations and shameful European hypocrisy. Tali continued to vent her frustrations at me, the resident European. She was angered by European reactions, criticising IDF tactics while leaving Israel to fight terrorists single handed. “I don’t understand Europe” she said as we flicked through the TV channels showing visions of citizens in shelters and soldiers on the march, “This is Hizbullah, they will not just stop firing rockets at us if we just have a ceasefire. They will not stop. Plus it is not even a war against Hizbullah, it is Syria and Iran really. Nobody wants Hizbullah, they are a terrorist organisation. And it seems they (the Europeans) are very happy to let Israel do it. Israel has to, we are not in Europe, they are right on our northern border. We have to do something about it.” Thus to some Israelis viewing the summer “war” as simply the latest outbreak of hostilities in the much wider “War on Terror”, it seemed as if a Janus-faced international community were happy to let Israel do their dirty work against the forces of radical Islam, giving the “green light” in private whilst presenting a critical public stance. The debate raged between different heads of state and kiosk coffee drinkers until the suspension was breached by both sides and a whole set of fresh concerns were brought to the fore.

Day 22: August 2

“Bold operations behind enemy lines” whilst “210 rockets hit north Wednesday” (Nahmias, ynetnews.com 02.08.2006)

IDF commando units land in town of Baalbek, some 80 km inside Lebanese territory Tuesday night. Combatants kill Hizbullah gunmen, capture several terrorists and return safely home.

Roe Nahmias, ynetnews.com 02.08.2006

New Record. More than 210 rockets were fired at northern Israel by Wednesday evening. A 52 year-old man, resident of Kibbutz Sa’ar near Nahariya, was killed after being hit by a rocket while riding his bicycle in the kibbutz. Dozens of people were hurt in northern communities.

Sharon Roffe-Ophir, ynetnews.com 02.08.2006

On a daily basis citizens digested a range of contrasting and contradictory stories, aware of the growing void between tales of heroic operations and the refugee-reality clearly visible on television sets and city streets. Our TV screens were filled each night with images of northern residents – those too patriotic or too poor to flee southwards – confined to sweltering communal bomb shelters or sealed rooms while *Katyushot* boomed above ground. “Imagine it is summer and they are in the shelter now for weeks. No *mazgan* (air conditioning), nothing to do...” Avi sympathised as we watched the news and adjusted our electric fan. Shoddy shelters and poorly supplied citizens were there for all to see and hear, “We’re living like dogs in the shelter, without air-conditioning, without showers and without activities for the kids. Like dogs” (“Ruthie” in Kiryat Shmona, Yoam Borovich, *haaretz.com* 06.08.2006).

Not only was the battle taking place right at home, “the home front has become the war front” (Lily Galili, *haaretz.com* 18.08.2006) - an outmoded distinction that went out with the launch of the first *intifada* and Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens, but it brought a whole host of simmering social issues into view. A government continually wavering over its administration of the war effort could no longer hide the impression of extreme incompetence. Events highlighted the paradox at the heart of the Israeli state, efficiently mobilizing its citizenry for war in the name of “security” on the one hand, yet incapable of ensuring their daily protection on the other. Such discrepancies were not lost on a population obliged to make a beeline for the south or those who were required to play their hosts. Everyone was aware of the “evacuees” queuing at city centre cash points to withdraw their life savings, clogging up the market or milling around shopping malls and stores. Humorous stories were swapped about these relative-invasions; about northern friends, aunts and uncles suddenly popping up on the doorstep, about sleeping on the couch so Grandma could take the bed, or about the very ordinary ordeals of co-habiting with one’s parents once again and arriving home from work to find Mum and Dad lying in wait with dinner on the table.

In our apartment we had Avi's cousin Einat who had travelled down from Haifa seeking respite from all the rockets, "In one hour we heard six today" she explained, "and I thought, I have had enough, it is too much! So I came down to Tel Aviv". The two of them came out to the *gina* and joined me for late night tea, "And here we sit outside at night, drink tea, it is a different world. There I am inside all the time." Einat explained. As we talked a fruit fell from one of the trees, hitting the ground with a soft thump. She jumped at the sound and then smiled, "(now) every noise makes me like this" she said.

A citizenry arguably accustomed to expecting little from its government after fairly recent and momentous shifts away from the state's socialist roots towards the embracing of market-led economic reforms, individualism and the privatisation of many public organisations, now found themselves neglected in a time of "war". "A homefront without backing" declared an enraged Ha'aretz editorial (haaretz.com 04.08.2006). Starting out as a socialist state with the communal agricultural kibbutz community, civic commitment, voluntary zeal, the figure of the pioneer settler "new Jew", and extensive government controls at its centre, Israel embarked on a gradual process of economic liberalisation from the 1960s. More recently economic and societal shifts from socialism to a kind of rugged, capitalist individualism are associated with the economic austerity measures implemented by Benjamin Netanyahu during his stint as Finance Minister between 2003 and 2005, cutting welfare payments to the poorest members of society, attempting to encourage all citizens into work, and privatising remaining government owned enterprises (Arian 2005, Ben-Bassat 2002, Dominguez 1989). "Every cooperative ethos was dismantled in favour of the individual" wrote Israeli journalist Ari Shavit in his post-war attack on what he viewed as the woeful erosion of former cooperative and committed forces in Israeli society, "the pursuit of absolute justice was mixed with the pursuit of absolute pleasure and turned reigning discourse from a discourse of commitment and enlistment to one of protest and pampering" (Shavit, haaretz.com 11.08.2006).

Left by the wayside by a state owing unpaid wages to hundreds of local government employees and reluctant even to admit it was fighting a "war" so as to avoid

activating emergency compensation regulations, ordinary citizens, particularly the poor, the ill and the elderly, were left to fend for themselves, falling back on family networks or the opportunistic generosity of the odd wealthy donor. It was left to the initiative of people like Hadas and her friend Orli who daringly drove up north during the early days of the war to distribute sweets and toys to children in the shelters, or philanthropic interventions from the likes of Arkadi Gaydamak, a Russian born business tycoon and self-professed man of the people, to step into the void left by a state seemingly unable, unwilling or simply too slow to protect and provide for its citizens.

The tented camp, quickly dubbed “Gaydamak City”, that he built for northern evacuees on Nitzanim beach several kilometres south of Tel Aviv earned the controversial benefactor Arkadi Gaydamak more headlines than the government, sidelining the politicians and highlighting the glaring inefficiencies and inadequacies of state provision for a citizenry at war. Popular concern whether Gaydamak was the genuine article or simply a shameless self-promoter proved beside the point. “He has shown how one man can accomplish what a whole government can’t” remarked Tom Segev, reflecting in *Ha’aretz* several months later (*ha’aretz.com* 02.12.2006, while the *Jerusalem Post* printed the grateful responses of Nitzanim’s new residents, who voiced nothing but praise for the tycoon’s timely generosity, “He’s our Robin Hood”, some people chuckle, “Our Messiah” (Paula Slier, *Jerusalem Post* 31.07.2006).

People reminded one another of these stately shortcomings so that conversations surrounding the conflict became ever more infused with feelings of abandonment, anxiety and critique. Comments exposed the empty illusion of protection and a state incapable of fulfilling even its basic function to keep citizens safe. Meanwhile in Tel Aviv, residents were soon on the receiving end of their very own dose of wartime worry, creating an atmosphere characterised by critical commentary and anxious speculation.

Day 23: August 3

"Nasrallah: If Israel bombs Beirut, Hizbullah will attack Tel Aviv" (haaretz.com 03.08.2006)

Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned on Thursday that if the Israel Defence Forces attacks Beirut proper, his guerrillas would launch rockets that would hit Tel Aviv. "If you bomb our capital Beirut, we will bomb the capital of your usurping entity... We will bomb Tel Aviv" he said.

haaretz.com 03.08.2006

Tel Aviv residents had been living on official "alert" since July 17 when Hizbullah had merely hinted at an attack on the city, but it was not until Nasrallah's explicit threat to set his sights on Tel Aviv that people began to take the prospect more seriously. Was it all just a cunning psychological ruse rustled up by Hizbullah spin-doctors to scare the city's civilians? Should we be taking precautions? we wondered. And if so, what were they? "I wasn't scared before but now it is scaring. I think there will be a bomb in Tel Aviv", Avi admitted as we discussed the state of our local bomb shelter. "Try cleaning out the bomb shelter, the room you like to pretend doesn't exist, the storeroom for all the crap that you don't know what to do with and you just toss inside", typed blogger and former journalist Allison Kaplan Sommer on *An Unsealed Room* (16.07.2006), wryly contemplating the very ordinary frustrations of clearing out one's sealed room come clutter-closet for its intended purpose. By the beginning of August, with Hizbullah's aggressive ultimatum and the head of Israel's Home Front Command warning "Tel Aviv residents will have at most a minute's warning before a rocket lands in the city" (Singer-Heruti, haaretz.com 06.08.2006), people made sure that they knew precisely where to run if the rockets came. For those of us living in older apartments there were no sealed rooms and we were left with locating our nearest municipality *miklat* (bomb shelter). Conversations chimed with stories of smelly shelters and cleaning catastrophes as the potential severity of the situation began to take hold;

Jill: I had a huge fight with the *vaad bayit* (building committee head)
 Lisa: oh yes?
 Jill: I finally got him to open ours and it's disgusting...there are the bones and fur of a dead cat in there. He laughed at me when I ordered him to get it cleaned!
 Lisa: what?! Call the municipality that is revolting. God, I'm steaming mad just thinking about him. I am starting to think we have a good chance of getting hit, BTW.
 Jill: Yes me too. That's why I'm checking you know where you gonna run. What about *ginzburg* (my local café)?
 Lisa: I suppose I could go there. I think I'm just going to have to take my chances. The law of averages does comfort me and you know I'm not one to succumb to psychological warfare.
 Jill: Indeed...but humour me
 Lisa: lol
 I will call the municipality and ask them what they're doing about our shelter but I am not holding my breath" (Lisa Goldman *On the Face* 05.08.2006).

One friend sent me the internet link to a map showing the location of each and every *miklat* in the city centre and neighbours began to wonder aloud about how we would unlock our own; a concrete communal bunker in one corner of the *gina* that doubled as a venue for the American Israel Photographic Society. Had it been properly maintained by the municipality? Would we have enough supplies? What would we do if the sirens sounded?

As an illustration of these new-found anxieties and a portent of popular controversy to come, *Time Out Tel Aviv* published a cover shortly after the start of the war showing a serene Tel Aviv, standing still whilst all around chaos reigns supreme (Figure 9 below). Inspired by the famous 1976 *New Yorker* cover; *View of the World from 9th Avenue* by artist Saul Steinberg, the *Time Out* image plays about with the American original. Taking up a view from Tel Aviv's elegant Rothschild Boulevard the picture plays up the city's popular standing as a self-removed socio-cultural *buah* (bubble), with all the wartime pandemonium that waits just beyond the city limits.

Whereas the world beyond the *Hudson* is depicted as peaceful empty space, the world beyond Tel Aviv's *Yarkon* river is full of violence and destruction. To the right are Baghdad and Tehran, on the left Haifa, Tiberias, Carmiel, Akko and Kiryat Shmona; areas under repeated *Katyusha* bombardment. As with the *New Yorker*

original, the *Time Out* cover makes reference to a particular metropolitan conceit and self-absorbed separation (of both city and citizens) from the wider world. Whilst we worried over shelters and sealed rooms certain sections of the country began turning their eye upon the Tel Aviv mini-metropolis, questioning the degree to which this seemingly serene centre was committing and contributing to the war effort. With all the army call-ups, relatives flocking in from the north, Nasrallah's deadly threats and the onset of a whipped up Tel Aviv witch hunt it seemed that the archetypal *buah* was about to well and truly burst.

"A bubble no more: Tel Avivians prepare for war" (haaretz.com 06.08.2006)

The old hackneyed stereotype of Tel Aviv as "*ha'buah*"; an insular, hedonistic socio-cultural bubble remote from the rest of the country re-emerged with a vitriolic vengeance during the Lebanon conflict. Whether the result of over-blown media invention (Lily Galili, haaretz.com 18.08.2006), or an outpouring of genuine resentment against "Yuppiestan" (Bradley Burston, haaretz.com 18.08.2006), the city came under considerable tabloid attack. Both cynically subtle, in the style of Gideon Levy's sharply drawn contrast between the northern town of Ma'a lot and central Tel Aviv:

This is 24 Rabbi Kook Street in the town of Ma'a lot. A 1960s apartment block, this is a train-like structure with several entrances, three stories, now renovated, with a bomb shelter beneath it. Ma'a lot is now a town of shelters. The whole town is in them. Well, not the whole town. Only the weaker citizens. Indeed, only the weak and the stubborn remain in this place, full of landscaping and stone sculptures, now appallingly empty. The sirens wail, the explosions resonate, the fear is overwhelming, just two hours from complacent Tel Aviv (haaretz.com 11.08.2006).

Or viciously jingoistic like Ma'ariv's 10 page discussion about why its readers would want to see Nasrallah make good on his claims to bomb the city, media accusations mirrored a degree of popular discontent. "I don't want to see anyone in Tel Aviv get hurt", wrote one Ha'aretz reader from the north, "But I want the people there to wake up and notice that there's a war going on here" (haaretz.com



New Yorker March 29 1976



Figure 9: Time Out Tel Aviv July 20 2006

18.08.2006), summing up the more moderate, if misguided notion that this time around Tel Avivians were somehow evading the war.

For most Tel Aviv residents the notion that they were partying on whilst the north was fielding rocket attacks was ludicrous and even offensive. “If you look around you here, 70% of the people in this bar will not be from Tel Aviv, they will be from Hadera, from Petach Tikva, from the periphery, wherever, and they have come here to do the Tel Aviv thing” explained one friend Eitan, gesturing to the people sipping drinks around us in a bar, incensed by the idea that Tel Avivians were ignoring the war. “It does not mean they do not have morals or a morality...it is not a value judgement. They go and do *miluim*, they go and fight in wars just like everyone else” he said.

Like all Israeli men within the reservist age-group the people in my life like my flatmate, out next-door neighbour, and many of my security guard and civil guard informants served their annual *miluim* commitments, putting on a uniform and disappearing for a few weeks of army activity each year. Living in Tel Aviv did not make them any less committed to their citizen-duties. Eyal Ben-Ari’s ethnographic and personal tale of his own *miluim* service in Hebron during the first *intifada* gives another example of how army actions may be made justifiable and understandable in relation to the rubric of national safety and security. His cadre of troops made the police-like activities and controlling of Palestinian they were required to do comprehensible through referral to military and national security texts; the grand narrative of the IDF protecting the survival of the nation-state (Ben-Ari 1998). He reveals the profound sense of public service and participation etched into the doing of reserve duty, a recurrent space and time in which such commitments are crystallised anew (Ben-Ari 1998. see also Helman 1997). Self-defence and survival turned conflict comprehensible as the age old battle in the name of national security. But the difficulty this time around was that some doubted the “no choice” scenario. Were Hizbullah really an existential threat?

In photographs (figure 10) and an email Inbal, an informant and friend captured beautifully the mocking ease with which many people inverted their fears and fended off the savage media frenzy:

SO - attached you'll find my little piece of Tel Aviv... [I'm letting you choose which pic came out better] last summer (Lebanon war), everyone kept talking about what would happen if Hizbullah were to fire missiles at Tel Aviv. Soon after the political and military debate exhausted itself, it seemed like the entire country launched an anti Tel Aviv campaign, criticizing the 'bubble' and how while people in the North are hiding in shelters the hedonist people of Tel Aviv go on with their little lives, sitting in cafes and talking about nothing etc etc. This led to an ugly atmosphere, everyone just loved hating Tel Aviv and what it represents and people actually WISHED that missiles would hit the city and show these left wing bastards!" In the middle of all this, the DVD store '8 mm' (just off Kikar Dizengoff), decided to have their say on the matter – they painted the store's window with instructions for Hizbullah on where to aim the missiles! The target chosen - the hideous Agam fountain in the Kikar :) That says everything about the city, its lust for life in spite and despite everything that surrounds it... I took pictures of the store's window and its location right next to the fountain. I hope the painting came out clear. In Hebrew it says

אם כבר את שיוריד המזרקה
(if it's going to happen anyway, at least let the missile hit the fountain - or something like that).





Figure 10: Inbal's photographs of the window paintings at the DVD store

As the casualty count went up the critical questions inevitably followed suit. Why did so few Tel Avivians sign up for combat units and so many opt for the comfort of the *Kiryas* (IDF central Tel Aviv headquarters)? Why did Tel Avivians sit around in cafés whilst the rest of the country suffered?

For many informants happy to deflect the rants of “crazy internet talk-backers” like Orna my Hebrew teacher friend and editor, or tabloid “*shtuyot*” (bullshit) like Eitan during our debate in the bar, the final straw came with the director of IDF personnel’s Army Radio accusation, “Tel Aviv residents are not taking a substantial part in the fighting. There has not been bereavement and there will not be bereavement” he charged (Ya’ir Sheleg, *haaretz.com* 27.08.2006). For Tali, fearing for a brother and helping friends to house their fleeing relatives it was one media melodrama too many, “Forget the “bubble” talk, which is annoying all year round...but no soldiers from Tel Aviv were killed?! A dead Tel Avivian would make you happy?! My brother was up there! A very good friend of mine, also from Tel Aviv was very seriously injured and nearly died. It makes me so angry...Sorry for

being alive. I'm from Tel Aviv too, perhaps I should jump off a building out of empathy to people in Haifa..."

From my own Tel Aviv perspective, surrounded by people wondering why the IDF had not yet won, doubting the Army's much lauded "power of deterrence" and questioning the mettle of their political leaders, there were far more pressing matters than a bit of anti-Tel Aviv aggression with which to contend and critique.

Day 29: August 9

"Cabinet approves widening ground operations" (ynetnews.com 09.08.2006)

Security cabinet approves expanding ground operation in south Lebanon; forces will be sent to take out *Katyusha* launchers. Olmert, Peretz, authorised to determine scope of action. IDF's recommended target: Litani River.

Ronny Sofer, ynetnews.com 09.08.2006

40,000 IDF troops and reservists were massed along the northern border Wednesday evening in preparation for Israel's largest and deepest ground incursion into southern Lebanon since the beginning of Operation Change of Direction last month.

Ya'akov Katz, Jerusalem Post 09.08.2006

Almost one month into the "war" that was not a war, with diplomatic efforts to re-work a US-France brokered cease-fire resolution reaching fever pitch in New York, the Israeli government finally pressed forward with IDF plans for a sweeping ground offensive, approving the operation but delaying its immediate implementation. For the hawks amongst the military correspondents and columnists swift army action could not come soon enough, "To the Litani" proclaimed a ynet headline (ynetnews.com 07.08.2006), while columnist Brigadier General (res) Dr Roni Barett called for an extensive and decisive operation (ynetnews.com 07.08.2006). "Snatch a

possible victory” ran the Ha’aretz editorial (ha’aretz.com 08.08.2006) demanding instant political approval for bold military manoeuvres “that can snatch a victory from the jaws of looming defeat”. The less jingoistic commentators hoped a reluctant PM would get his act together and resist such army pressures while the pessimists predicted disaster on a catastrophic scale if diplomacy could not keep pace with these new military developments. Israelis, tired with cabinet vacillations and political procrastinations still wondered why the war was not yet won.

At home Avi was in favour of further military fighting but after weeks of empty promises he doubted the ground force go ahead would ever come to effective fruition. “I don’t know about a cease fire. And Olmert gave the green light to push further. Green light and again green light. They are always giving the green light but nothing happens!” he said. People began to question why Hizbullah had not been dealt with earlier? Why if several thousand guerrilla fighters really constituted a serious security threat to Israel’s survival and vastly superior strike force, had nothing been heard or done about Hizbullah before? Or if Hizbullah were just a gaggle of incompetent guerrillas compared to Israel’s well honed military machine then why had they not been crushed already? “And people are beginning to get angry, to get frustrated to ask what is going on. Why did they not have proper plans of how to attack Lebanon, how to fight Hizbullah? It is not just Olmert and Halutz it is the sins of the *memshallah* (government) before, of Mofaz and the chiefs of the army before. What did they do for six years while Hizbullah was getting all these weapons? It is like Yom Kippur war, we were too proud, too much ego and we were surprised” Avi continued as we picked up our debate a few days later.

Our television and couch time conversations increasingly centred on military incompetence, on the apparent lack of plans and planning by IDF and government strategists. “I mean first you must know Hizbullah is serious, they are trained fighters. First you must have good intelligence, you should know how good they are, how many weapons they have. You should have plans ready. Not like this. I mean attack, kill Hizbullah, burn everything if you have to. But not this! You have all this

technology, this great army, so use it; know how to use it!” was Avi’s rather angry and disappointed opinion on the matter as we sat watching the news.

Meanwhile as the IDF’s invincible *Merkava4* tanks succumbed to anti-tank land mines in Lebanon and returning reserve soldiers told of confusion, contradictory orders and missing supplies, the ordinary citizen began to cast around for blame. Scathing remarks and snide critiques were coupled with mounting disbelief at the sheer incompetence of state infrastructure and government leadership. “It says here in the paper that the soldiers up there don’t have enough food and water, they had none for hours and hours. It says here “we begged the pilot to bring water but he said it was too dangerous to make a drop”, Avi angrily explained as he sat on the couch reading the paper aloud to me, “I mean, they are just 5km from the border. Here is the border (puts one finger on the coffee table) and here they are (bangs his other fist representing the soldiers down a short distance away). It is all just in this f***ing 5km and they can’t get them water!”

Again and again, the fiction of the protective, capable state was unmasked by popular critical commentary, the sham of a strong security ethos laid bare by citizens anxious that their state may be just as chaotic, just as incompetent as all the Arab countries around them.

After the deaths of 12 reservists in a rocket attack near kibbutz *Kfar Giladi* on August 6th and yet another sluggish standoff between an armoured reserve division and a handful of Hizbullah fighters a few days later around *Bint Jbeil*, anxieties reached a rising pitch of recrimination and critique.

Day 34: August 14

“Ceasefire between Israel, Hizbullah enters into force” (ynetnews.com 14.08.2006)

4,000 rockets later, northern residents venture out of shelters Ashkenazi and Hasson, haaretz.com 14.08.2006

For weeks, Israelis have been biting their nails with anxiety about what is taking place on the battlefield, or in northern Israel. Now, the anxiety is about what is happening in Manhattan, where the diplomatic rollercoaster has still not reached the final UN Security Council resolution that will set in motion a ceasefire.

Rosenberg, Today's Situation 11.08.2006

On Friday August 11 UN diplomats finally succeeded in hammering out a ceasefire resolution; UNSCR 1701 called for a “full cessation of hostilities” and a 15,000 – strong Lebanese force to replace Israeli troops in the south. Prime Minister Olmert endorsed the draft decision but tabled discussion until it could be ratified by his cabinet on Sunday morning. In the meantime the Israeli PM put the ceasefire to one side and set about increasing fire power against Hizbullah. Both he and Defence Minister Amir Peretz stopped sitting on the fence and sent Israeli infantry over the border in a last ditch effort to eradicate *Katyusha* launchers and clear land between the Israeli border and Litani river (pushing Hizbullah out of range of Israeli communities). Thus when the Israeli cabinet gave its ceasefire approval two days later most eyes were turned to the intensified hostilities as Israeli forces bombarded Hizbullah targets in Tyre and Beirut and Hizbullah fired 250 rockets into Israel's northern towns (BBC Day-by-day: Lebanon crisis – week five 13.08.2006).

Comments at the kiosk were disparaging “there will not be a ceasefire” according to Barak, “they will not stop” according to Avi, and despairing in turns, as politics descended into back-stabbing and bickering. “In the newspaper they are talking about this political fighting now, Tzipi Livni (Israel's Foreign Minister) against Olmert and this against this. People are dying and they are like children” Avi complained. Among the press pack only Yedioth Aharonot affirmed the termination of hostilities, hailing an “incomparable political achievement” (BBC 13.08.2006). The rest had harsher words for the ceasefire resolution; “The resolution represents a near-total victory for Hizbullah and its state sponsors Iran and Syria, and an unprecedented defeat for Israel and its ally the United States” declared Caroline

Glick writing in the Jerusalem Post (BBC 13.08.2006). Sima Kadmon of Yedioth expressed the “confusion, bewilderment, uncertainty and chaos” of public feeling about the discrepancies in decision-making, while an Ha’aretz editorial laid the charge of incompetence and incredulity firmly at the Prime Minister’s door, “The two actions – the diplomatic and the military – are supposed to complement each other, but they also encompass a built-in contradiction that requires a high level of statesmanship and leadership if it is to be resolved. No such level has been exhibited during the current crisis” (BBC 13.08.2006). The citizen on the street meanwhile, began to ask searching questions of themselves and the state: no sooner had the ceasefire sounded than the country became engulfed in bitter analysis and post-war accusation.

August 15

“The day after: How we suffered a knockout” (Pedatzur, haaretz.com
16.08.2006)

We do not need a commission (of inquiry) to know what happened or what has to happen. The Olmert government has failed on every level. The Olmert government must go.

Caroline Glick. Jerusalem Post. 15.08.2006

Endless blunders have been revealed in this war...

Ma’ariv in BBC 15.08.2006

The man who failed, who deluded us, who was overconfident and transmitted the disease to the government, is the Chief of Staff. He should be the one to go.

Ha’aretz in BBC 15.08.2006

With the official end of hostilities Israeli public life was consumed with post-conflict critique. The popular post-war autopsy, which lasted for months and dominated talk

at newspaper stands and kiosk benches, centred on why “we” did not win the war. The general assumption was that “we” should have won, while looking around for someone to blame. Encompassing both pragmatic assessments and pessimistic despair the daily debate focussed on the conduct of the war with neither a question nor a care about whether conflict should have broken out in the first place. The idea that the racketeer government had through its own belligerence, brought calamity and danger down on its people, was nowhere to be seen. Crucially, for Charles Tilly (1985) as for Tobias Kelly and Alpa Shah (2006), a focus on the supposed legitimacy of violence is to miss the point slightly, since the credibility of actions taken in the name of state protection are often based not on their inherent righteousness but on their practical effectiveness. In a climate of “no choice” perceptions and notions that military deterrence and force provide the only dialogue with which to engage with and dominate one’s enemies, violence and the ability to wage war become potent conceptions of power and protection. In this sense violence does not necessarily destroy power as Hannah Arendt argued (1969), but may be a productive and formative source of political authority (Kelly and Shah 2006). The Israeli regime came under critical popular fire not because it went to war but because it failed to do so effectively. It was its inability to wage war and shield its citizens simultaneously and successfully that dominated newspaper and public sphere debate.

The “war” meanwhile was declared a fiasco by popular demand and Olmert and his administration an outright disgrace. Israelis sense of strength had taken a serious blow. Not only did Olmert and the IDF top brass face an onslaught of condemnation and critique, allegations of gross mismanagement and defeat, but some commentators heralded a “crisis” of values at the very heart of the nation (Ari Shavit, *haaretz.com* 19.10.2006). Politicians and generals began trading accusations (figure 11 below), opposition politicians came creeping out of the woodwork, and the more vocal among them, in particular former Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon, began touring their own disparaging opinion trail around the TV studios. And, as the Prime Minister received a very public media dressing down for his own conduct of the war, fielding cries for commissions of inquiry into how and why it all went wrong, his nemesis, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah crowed triumphantly over the *al-Manar* air-

waves, “We are today before a strategic, historic victory, without exaggeration” he proclaimed (Declan Walsh and Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, the Guardian 15.08.2006).



Figure 11: post-war post mortem

After five weeks of fighting Hizbullah had survived with most of its weapons arsenal intact and Israeli troops - having failed to live up to their leaders' hasty and grandiose goals - remained in southern Lebanon, holding the fort while in Europe's capitals diplomats discussed how many soldiers to send. In Jerusalem the PM continued to avoid calls for a juridical investigation leaving the front pages and daily conversations to form their own common commission of inquiry. The general view at the coffee kiosk (now with the added benefit of hindsight) was that the conflict's aims had been misguided from the very start. It began with promises to return the two abducted soldiers, turned into a vow to crush Hizbullah, dissolved into a pledge to end rocket fire into Israel, and ended with Hizbullah hurt but hardly defeated, with rockets flying until the dying seconds and with Regev and Goldwasser still nowhere

to be seen. The government's protective pledges had been proven empty time and time again.

In terms of policy Olmert's great "realignment" plan, the now-official name for his "convergence" scheme to quit large sections of the West Bank was placed firmly off the official agenda, another victim of a failed unilateral policy. After all Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 in a unilateral move that eschewed any engagement with Beirut and look what happened there. "Rehabilitating the north" became the new, rather more modest order of the day.

Through their daily discussions Tel Avivians revealed the security-state as a sham. They questioned the futility of this round of soldierly sacrifice and the state's shameful neglect of its citizens, its failure to defend and protect its people from attack. One evening at the civil guard base after patrolling a public rally held in support of the still abducted soldiers, Ari, a car-dealer by day and my partner for the night, and myself returned to find most of the uniformed officers sitting on couches, drinking coke and watching a game of basketball on television. Ari poured himself a drink and turning to our station manager Anat asked, "I don't understand, what is the point of the rally?" at which Anat quickly turned away from the screen and shouted "Why did we go to war? To rescue the soldiers. But we did not, we did half a job! If you are going to take the nation to war you should do what is necessary. What do you think the government is doing for the soldiers, to get them back? Not enough! What do you mean you don't understand?!" For some citizens, anger over failures and government futility still ran high.

Some sought answers in the changing face of Israeli society, fearing a cocktail of individualism, materialism and liberalism had corroded the frontier spirit - a mixture of stoicism and will to sacrifice - that had characterised the nascent state and seen the country triumph over former adversity (for example Ari Shavit, haaretz.com 19.10.2006). Was Nasrallah right to call the present Israel a world of "spider webs" that could easily be broken, its people pre-occupied with the pursuit of the good life, unwilling to risk an all-out war? Others blamed the outcomes and the occupation that

followed Israel's victory against surrounding Arab states in 1967 for fostering a uniquely Israeli and right-wing *idée-fixe* that what cannot be done with force, can be done with more force.

The perspectives of those grappling with a sense of insecurity, failure and fears for the future were rather less clear cut, "We will be this big to the rest of the world and the Arabs" declared Avi, placing his forefinger and thumb a centimetre apart, "And I don't mean for me, my ego as an Israeli, I mean in a year the Arabs will think who, what is this, this little Israel and they will attack". And although historians Tom Segev and Ze'ev Sternhell (Segev, *haaretz.com* 17.08.2006) railed against the war's existential overtones and "no choice" justifications: "an unsuccessful military campaign was upgraded with the wave of a magic wand to the level of a war of survival", such critiques of deterrence and "survival" were a far cry from conventional wisdom. To the ordinary citizen like Avi who viewed Arab aggression as a never-ending story of Israeli defence and survival, or like Adam (see below), a sociology student who served coffee a few days a week at the kiosk, all the existential fears were felt as real, with the next round of fighting lying in wait just around the corner.

The climate of critique coloured by hopes and fearful doubts about the future revealed an ongoing apprehension over protection and revived old Jewish collective memories of persecution at the hands of a hostile majority. At the time the circular inevitability of conflict, the oscillation between violence and relative calm seemed a given. This current conflict was only a part of broader battles between Israel and its Arab neighbours and therefore it was only a matter of time before another aggressive episode erupted. And so, from the opinion of the man or woman on the street to Hadas, Michal, Avi and others at the kiosk, to the highest echelons of the armed forces, "round two" with Hizbullah seemed inevitable. "Prepare for the next round" warned the *Jerusalem Post* (Efraim Inbar 15.08.2006) as Israelis' existential fears were exacerbated by a fresh barrage of vociferous and vocal assaults from Iran's President Ahmadinejad. The anxieties, aggravated by an international contretemps over Iran's nuclear capabilities, built for weeks. Adam, sensitive to all the forecasts

of future conflict and doom, shared his concerns as I arrived at the kiosk one morning shortly before returning to Edinburgh:

Me: How are you?

Adam: Not too good.

Me: Why what's wrong?

Adam: Ach nothing, so you're leaving before the bomb?

Me: what are you talking about? Iran?

Adam: Yeah, it is really scary right now. I mean everyone is carrying on as normal, just like normal, but it will come. What is there to stop him?

Ahmadinejad? My Uncle used to work as an advisor to Tzipi Livni (the Foreign Minister) and he said that he is just as crazy in real life as he is on TV. And he says the same thing, only to your face. "I will destroy you, I will destroy all the Jews". He is crazy, but he will do it, I really think that one day we will have the bomb, crazy like Hitler take two. But meanwhile we just carry on...

Seen as only so much sabre rattling by some, others divined a more sinister grand plan to "wipe Israel off the map" in official Syrian and Iranian statements at the time (Ron Ben-Yishai, ynetnews.com 18.08.2006). Talk circulated of a Tehran-Beirut-Damascus "axis of evil", not to mention the ongoing hostilities with Hamas in Gaza. "Listen it was not a war, it was just a fight, the real war will come with Syria and Iran" explained one kiosk customer, predicting dark and dangerous times ahead.

Concluding remarks

Despite the bluster, the national self-questioning, the strong criticisms levelled at the political leadership, the military failures and the incompetent revelations of the conflict, debate died down and for the time being Olmert, Halutz et.al. remained in office. The protective paradox, that the state is essential for the security of the Jewish people and yet also provokes the very dangers against which it claims to protect,

played out in dramatic and dangerous style during the summer of 2006. And yet the state and the illusion of protection stayed in place, re-constituted through the shared experiences and criticisms of communities created in the absence of security and an effective state, reproduced by citizens committed to the hopeful idea of a state capable of providing a comforting or racketeering form of protection. Very soon after the hype, the uproar and the public critique, the conflict in Lebanon was on its way to being normalised as further news circulated and new events took centre stage in public discussion and debate.

On September 15 Olmert finally announced the make-up of a state governmental panel lead by Justice Eliyahu Winograd and charged with investigating the management of the “war” that was still not an official war. Although a far cry from the anticipated judicial-led inquiry, all attention was already on the next, new calamity of the moment, including escalating allegations over political sleaze, sexual scandal and corruption. As if the debacle in Lebanon was not enough, Israel’s politicians were soon revealed as money-grabbing, lecherous swindlers incompetent and improper to boot.

This chapter has examined public critique and commitment, hopes and doubts that revealed and recreated the effective and protective state during conflict with Hizbullah. Yet such caring critiques and collective anxieties are not confined to more obvious security threats and issues such as military conflict and war. The next two chapters take up other events and security threats - political scandal and an escaped convict - through which security and the perceived protective incapacities of the state were also experienced and lived out.

Chapter six: Corruption and the scandalous state

August 23

"Katsav faces police grilling in blackmail, rape probe" (haaretz.com
23.08.2006)

Referring to reports of his alleged blackmail by a former secretary claiming he sexually harassed her, Katsav says he only had "professional relations" with his female employees.

Neta Sela, ynetnews.com 10.07.2006

A special team of police investigations is expected to arrive at the President's residence in Jerusalem on Wednesday morning and interrogate President Moshe Katsav under warning on suspicion of sexually harassing a former employee and pardoning prisoners in exchange for money.

Aviram Zino, ynetnews.com 23.08.2006

MK Tzachi Hanegbi (Kadima) was indicted yesterday on charges of fraud and breach of trust for allegedly making 69 inappropriate political appointments while serving as environment minister between 2001 and 2003. The state has also charged Hanegbi with committing election fraud, giving false testimony, taking a false oath and attempting to exert unlawful influence on a voter. The 33 page indictment includes 321 witnesses for the prosecution.

Nir Hasson and Mazal Mualem, haaretz.com 27.09.2006

The last chapter looked at conflict, national security and the role of public communities of critique in unveiling and upholding the (un)protective capacities of the state. Chapter six addresses other security threats and experiences: collective anxieties and public uproar surrounding the political scandals and tales of corruption that surfaced once the fighting stopped.

At the conflict's end all the summer scandals - kept in check whilst the country went to war - came out of the closet, shocking Israelis with wild stories of dodgy dealings and outrageous affairs. Just when it seemed things could not get any worse, they did, and with a procession of scurrilous revelations in full media swing, the political and post-war turmoil of recent weeks turned to fully fledged public furore. "Never has a new government with a line-up of fresh faces and ambitious goals been entangled in so many foolish affairs within such a short space of time" lamented Yoel Marcus in Ha'aretz (haaretz.com 18.08.2006).

After weeks marked by military failure, fear and neglect, this lurid trail of misdeeds and misdemeanours sparked scathing condemnation over state impropriety laying bare just how easily civic anxiety can be generated by perceptions of improper, ineffective and incapable state institutions (Wedeen 2003). I arrived for coffee one day to find the kiosk clique of neighbours - Nadav the musician, Ilan the bookseller and Hadas - discussing the current sense of despair:

Nadav: But why? Why feel depressed?

Ilan: Of course people do.

Hadas: Look, people come, take a coffee, open the newspaper and what do you see? Always something about Katsav, Hanegbi, Olmert or war, or Hizbullah, or Nasrallah, or Syria, or Hamas, or someone kills someone with his car. Of course it causes depression; it makes you depressed. You cannot shut yourself off from these things. But if you can be (holds her hands up to her face making a set of finger-blinkers or tunnel-like vision) then good."

In spite of claims to the contrary; trying to remain blinkered to current affairs or avoiding certain news items, my informants' critical commentaries were care-full and considerate, revealing a caring and longing for a better state, for how things should be. Yet just as the war-time critiques revealed, hope's optimistic future-orientation is always on the cusp or tempered by doubt and despair. In this case it meant the fearful, sneaking suspicion that claims to state capabilities were just a

hollow screen, devoid of competence, ineffective and inept. The two everyday practices; longing or care and critique are coeval, recreating a desire or sense of entitlement to a competent state through the very act of committed critique.

To begin with Israelis were rocked by news of the “Halutz Affair”; revelations that just 3 hours into the summer kidnapping crisis their Chief of Staff Dan Halutz saw fit to take time out from the hectic war-room, call his stock broker and cash in his personal shares. Then there was the former Justice Minister who faced charges of crude sexual harassment after allegedly sticking his tongue down a female soldier’s throat. The Chairman of the *Knesset* Foreign Affairs and Defence committee Tzachi Hanegbi, stood accused of a string of fraudulent offences including perjury, bribery and making illegal political appointments during his time as Environment Minister. Their indiscretions and misdeeds animated public discussions and made their way into all kinds of conversations. During one of our regular Tuesday evening patrols the *Mishmar Ezrachi* (civil guard) “old boys” discussed Hanegbi’s personal and political improprieties between conversation comparing their various heart medications, scandal blending seamlessly with recommendations of particular pills or pondering what their wives were cooking for dinner that night. Revelations even emerged about the Prime Minister himself over accusations of corruption and back hand deals on his luxurious Jerusalem home. But perhaps the most shocking sensation of all broke with the scandalous Presidential expose. Sordid tales of President Katsav’s sexual proclivities, his harassment of female staff, lascivious abuses of power, wire tapping and witness harassment filled the front pages for weeks. Moshe Katsav, once the wonder-boy of Likud party politics, the country’s ceremonial and symbolic leader; an icon of Israeli values, was now the focus of the most embarrassing of police investigations and under serious suspicion of rape.

Having heard nothing but failures and “war” for weeks citizens now feared their beleaguered leaders, already labelled ineffectual and incompetent, were really nothing better than two-bit crooks. No wonder they could not win a war. Criticisms focussed on the incapacities of the state, the corruption and moral laxity of

government, and the desire for thorough investigation twinned with a kind of resigned normality.

The stories on the news sounded like the stuff of Hollywood gangster movies. The fact that politicians were a set of corrupt and unscrupulous individuals was there for all to see. Yet these incidents were hardly new news. Most people simply received confirmation of their scurrilous suspicions, or something they had known all along. During the weeks following the President's investigation and the cloud of corruption surrounding top politicians like Hanegbi and Olmert, the incidents became the leading subject of everyday public conversation in Israel. Was the President really a sleazy sexual predator? How had he covered it up for so long? Do we really believe all these women coming forward with their shocking stories? What would the world think of the country now? Should Hanegbi be sacked? Which politicians knew about his bribery activities? Didn't we always know Olmert was crooked and corrupt?

Despite the atmosphere of alarm, these events and people's reactions to them were not unprecedented. In fact many Israelis found confirmation for something they knew. It was not a shock to the system for the naïve citizen not in the know. It was the normal condition or ordinary state of political affairs in Israel. Crooks and corruption came with the territory: just think of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, admired by many Israelis, his war criminal past, his and his sons' shady business dealings, rumours about his marriages and official investigations into his murky business affairs.

The efficient, technocratic, military machine and economic powerhouse picture of the Israeli state was often undermined by the overriding impression of incompetence and corruption, which appeared in almost every aspect of civilian and military life. Soldiers were left for days and weeks with no water or rations until they began raiding Lebanese stores in desperation. Public workers went on strike over unpaid wages. University staff brought higher education to a grinding halt for months at a time through strikes. The Chief of Staff was on the telephone to his stockbroker, saving his own financial skin when he should have been concentrating on securing

the state. Citizens were left in sweltering shelters. Cabinet ministers were caught with their fingers in the public coffers. Corruption, fraud, disorganization, embezzlement, arrogance and some kind of *balagan* (mess/chaos) seemed the order of the day most of the time.

And yet the state did not fall apart under all these accusations, it was a fairly – with the exception of Katsav perhaps – normal part of politics. Politicking, as Avi put it one day, is always a bit about “*protectsia*”, the Hebraised version of protection in Tilly’s second mafia-inspired meaning of state protection. In this sense Israeli politicians routinely act as racketeers, raking in corrupt payments and deals as their price for doing politics. *Protectsia* popped up in everyday conversation every time there was a rumour of corruption or nepotism or dubious financial affairs. We used it jokingly in Hebrew class every time one of us managed to butter up our belligerent teacher and gain some praise. We used it every time our grumpy neighbour complained about the coffee kiosk, called the police and had Hadas’ stools removed thanks to his personal municipality contacts. Dirty dealings were expected, although loathed, quite ordinary although criticised, attracting a mixture of shame and sometimes admiration.

Credibility, as we saw with the war-time critiques, may rest not only on the legitimate use of force but on the effective use of force. In a similar sense a politician or public figure may at times be judged not on their scrupulous credentials but on their ability to get things done. Crucially, this is why a shady Russian business tycoon with a murky past like Arkadi Gaydamak could rise to the heights of public popularity during the conflict with Hizbullah. Because despite the rumours about dodgy deals and illegal millions it was he, and not the state authorities, who offered assistance to northern refugees in need. Similarly an effective politician may survive for quite some time despite a cloud of corruption, just like Prime Minister Olmert himself whose sneaky and disreputable reputation as a cigar-smoking bon-viveur had followed him since his days as a lawyer and Jerusalem mayor.

Concluding remarks

In a similar case to these stories of corruption and misconduct Yael Navaro-Yashin describes the scandal that erupted in Turkey following the media circus surrounding a car accident involving a minister, a former vice-head of state, a mafia boss and a prostitute (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 131). Despite the questions, the popular critiques, the journalistic investigations, the public uproar, the plots, the counterplots and the corruption the idea of the state remained intact, reproduced through citizens' cynical remarks and criticisms, the rapid circulation and consumption of news, their own complicity and "pretence to normality" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 179). Although I find the notion of cynicism in Zizek's terms less useful in the Israeli case – the state seems more tangible than a psychological construct or "signifier" – people were certainly cynical and sceptical about their scandalous state. It was almost normal, we are used to it, what more could you expect from politicians? Their cynical critiques and the circulation of stories highlighting the corruption and scandal of state officials conjured up communities reproducing and reigniting an (in)capable state and degree of normalcy through their critical everyday actions upon the world; criticising Katsav at the kiosk, discussing Hanegbi and heart pills on civil guard patrol, trying to remain blinkered to the bamboozling state like Hadas. "The state endures. It is regenerated again after every public effort to deconstruct it. Fantasies (or hopes) for the state keep it up" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 179).

But after the external security threats of Hizbullah and the stories of political scandal came an internal protective calamity. Never mind the incapacity to shield citizens from political corruption or an enemy without, in November 2006 Tel Avivians were soon swept up in an internal breach of security, despairing at a state incapable of even ensuring communal safety within.

This chapter explored security threats posed by political scandal and the protective state as an expected and routine form of racketeering, criticised and reproduced through popular critical and creative activities. Chapter seven examines the popular practices and perceptions of security that arose when another security threat: an escaped rapist, hit the streets of Tel Aviv.

Chapter seven: Convict on the run

Escape

November 24

"Police Blunder: Serial rapist escapes" (Cohen, ynetnews.com 24.11.2006)

Massive search after serial rapist who is serving a 35-year sentence escapes from police officers outside Tel Aviv court; growing suspicions that he had planned escape as woman spots him taking off jail uniform under which he was wearing pair of jeans.

Avi Cohen, ynetnews.com 24.11.2006

Did we really need the rapist's leap in order to reveal the Israel police in all its nakedness? Did we really need this Benny Sela, who drops his pants in order to catch our police with their pants down? For anyone who did not yet know, now you know. This is not, thankfully a police state; it is, disastrously, a no-police state.

Yossi Sarid, haaretz.com 26.11.2006

Chapter six discussed the state's protective (in)capacities and credibility, revealed and reproduced by resigned and critical public critique in the face of political scandal and corruption. This chapter follows the flow of events and experiences surrounding another type of security threat, neither the national security of chapter five, nor the critiques surrounding political corruption and credibility of chapter six, but the sudden escape of a convicted criminal.

On Friday November 24 Tel Aviv's residents awoke to the news that Benny Sela, the country's most renowned serial rapist, had escaped police custody and was on the loose in the centre of town. A few months after the conflict in Lebanon people now found themselves faced with a very different threat and the return of yet another so-

called “nightmare” only this time it came not in the guise of Hizbullah guerrillas but as a small serial rapist; the man who, twelve years ago, had instituted a “reign of terror” on the Tel Aviv streets (Rebecca Anna Stoil, Jerusalem Post 26.11.2006).

Picked up by policemen following a fake computer-generated message to accompany him from prison to a labour court appearance, Sela succeeded in giving his two keystone coppers the slip. Realizing en route that the Tel Aviv Labour Court is out of session on a Friday the officers then took Sela along to the city Magistrate’s Court where they were due to drop off a second detainee. Feigning that he had forgotten a personal item in the car, Sela overpowered his police officers in the court-room car-park, sprinted over the barbed wire-topped barrier and vanished into the city streets. His prison-issue trousers were soon spotted on a boulevard behind the court and eye-witnesses claimed to have seen someone stripping into civilian clothes hidden beneath the prison uniform before scampering away. Israel’s Internal Security Minister immediately termed the incident an “embarrassing and fatal mistake” (Roni Singer, Jonathan Lis, haaretz.com 24.11.2006), and he was not alone in his analysis. News of the fraudulent court order and trouser switching scenario made a mockery of the police and prison systems (see figure 12), prompting rumours of an inside job. This was no opportunistic get-away; it was a carefully planned escape. And, with one of the country’s most notorious convicted criminals on the loose, a massive manhunt was soon underway.



Figure 12: “We’re caught with our pants down” ynetnews.com 11.2006

Helicopters hovered overhead and police officers were everywhere, patrolling our streets in pairs and scouring neighbourhoods for the fearsome fugitive. Police chief Moshe Karadi promised the “maximum amount of manpower and equipment” for the mission to apprehend the runaway rapist. Sela’s unflattering mug shot was soon plastered on posters across town, and, as he continued to evade capture his face appeared on enormous billboards encouraging the public to aid in his arrest; “Let’s catch him together, call:100” the caption read (figure 13).



Figure 13: “Let’s catch him together” Benny Sela billboard

“The whole land is afraid” (Yossi Sarid, haaretz.com 26.11.2006) and “Benny Sela: a study in evil” (Anna Stoil, Jerusalem Post 26.11.2006) ran the headlines, commencing a fortnight of media hysteria. “Even the big city is now maddened with its own fears” scoffed Yossi Sarid (haaretz.com 26.11.2006) comparing a terror-stricken Tel Aviv with the summer suffering of northern communities who bore the brunt of Hizbullah’s rocket retaliations. All the summertime talk of Tel Aviv as a narcissistic bubble, uncommitted to and unaffected by the conflict in Lebanon, safe

and sound sitting in cafes and sunbathing while northern communities were bombarded by rockets were reflected in these sarcastic newspaper comparisons. Now the city would suffer its own share of insecurity.

However, whereas Hizbullah were an external enemy Benny Sela came from within the country. Sela was undeniably a home-grown menace to society. Hizbullah embodied the “terrorist” tyranny and all the pressures, disorder and chaos Israel faces from outside its own frontiers. Benny Sela on the other hand stood for Israel’s internal security predicaments and all the other difficulties to do with the economy, poverty, race, religion, land, settlers, sexuality and secularism, all the inner disputes and disorder that seem to rear their heads during times of relative calm. Whereas Hizbullah presented a protective problem for national security, the boundaries of the state and the security of hundreds of thousands of citizens, Sela posed danger to personal safety. And whereas in the case of Hizbullah the regime was largely perceived as failing to shield citizens from the barrage of *Katyushot*, with Sela it was the state’s own blundering institutions and individuals that put the population at risk. Hizbullah were the political, national security threat and Sela the internal criminal. Yet both episodes when taken together demonstrate state attempts to master forces that appear beyond its capabilities or control, undermining its strong assurances and showing up the fragility of its protective, security-centred claims.

Yet, my informants, for the most part, were far from panic stricken; fluctuating somewhere between mild fear or frustration and outright ridicule. Instead, talk and news tacked back and forth between women being afraid of a small Yemeni rapist on the loose and anxiety over a government seemingly so incapable they could not track down a small Yemeni rapist; shedding light on two very different, but interrelated kinds of insecurity. At the kiosk Hadas displayed her own opinions on the Sela episode by snipping satirical cartoons from the newspapers and attaching them to her pin board (see below).

Seeing Sela

As days passed with Sela still on the run rumours spread that he may still be lurking in Tel Aviv, that a huge bounty was out on his head and that hundreds of residents had called the police with supposed Sela-sightings. It seemed as if everybody was on the look-out, so busy being aware and alert that they began to see Sela in everyone and everywhere (see cartoon below). “I feel sorry for all the poor guys who are short and Yemeni” (a common reference to Sela’s appearance and ethnic background) sympathised Moti, a Mishmar Ezrachi volunteer and informant who had been out on patrol, listening in on report after report of suspicious sightings broadcast over local police radio. The problem was not about some kind of peculiarly Yemeni features but the fact that in a country with so many *Mizrachi* citizens Sela looked just like everyone else (figure 14). “Yes, every other man looks like him” said Hadas during a kiosk conversation about the escapee, “there was a man here today, a short one wearing a *kippa* (skullcap) and I thought WOW he looks just like Benny Sela!” And so in some ways Sela became a figure of fun, but a fearsome one at that.

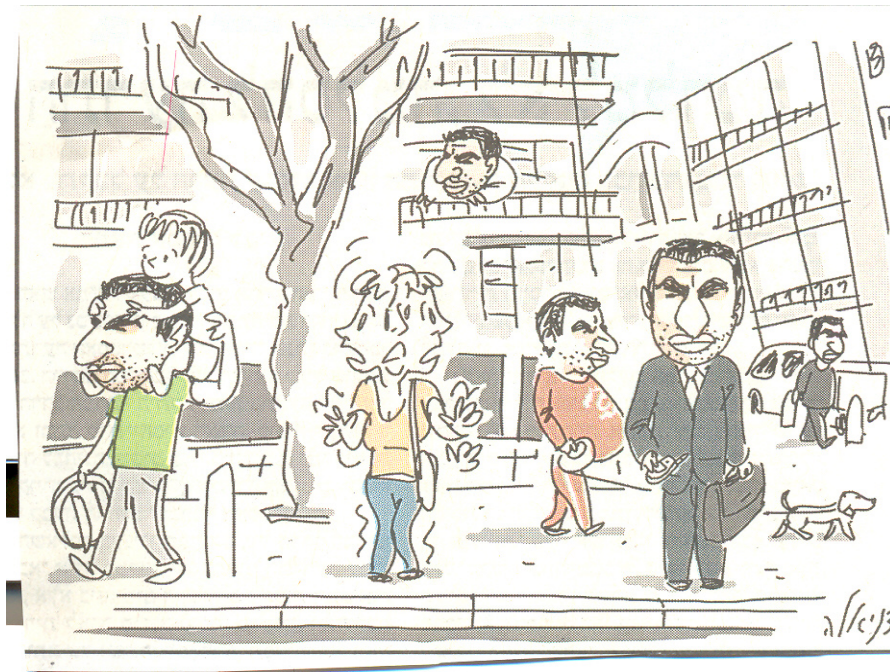


Figure 14: Sela cartoon from Hadas's kiosk

Sela came from a Yemeni Israeli family, brought up in one of Tel Aviv's poorest southern neighbourhoods but discussions had little to do with his being Yemeni (besides his short dark looks), generalising about Yemeni Israelis, or Sela's difficult childhood, and was concerned more with his history as a serial rapist and hopes for his quick capture.

Conversations at the kiosk, at the shops, in the streets and in the papers exposed how easily public apprehensions and anxiety can be generated by perceptions of incapable state institutions and practices, and how critique can make claims for entitlements citizens felt they were due. People were shocked that the police had allowed this to happen in the first place and angry that now Sela was on the loose the police seemed utterly unable to catch him and as a corollary unable to protect Israeli citizens.

Keeping safe

On my way home from an interview one evening I was accosted half way across the dark and deserted *gina* by a terrified looking Anat, closing up Hadas' kiosk on her own. "Right you are staying right here while I clean up!" she barked, "Is that okay?" She finished cleaning for the night whilst I lent a hand, emptying bins and folding benches,

I am just so scared, it is really weird. I'm not normally like this but it's really scary to be here alone. Thanks so much. I mean usually in Tel Aviv I feel so safe being on the streets at any time, whether that is a silly thing to feel or not I don't know. Probably there are plenty of weirdos out there. But when I came back to Tel Aviv from England (she married a British man and lived in the UK for 6 years) I felt so much safer, as a woman, to walk on the streets at night. I really didn't feel safe in England, you have so many psychos over there, you're used to it!

Some women, like Anat, were clearly spooked both by Sela's escape and the realization that their streets were not as safe as they once thought. For her Israel is not or should not be a place where one is scared to walk the streets for fear of being attacked, unlike a country like England where, apparently, such problems are

commonplace. Newspapers painted a picture of women too scared to sleep alone and one female friend did call up two others, insisting that they sleep on her couch. Some of us found male friends and family taking a novel and uncharacteristic interest in our wellbeing and whereabouts, putting a gendered twist on security concerns. “Natalie what time will you be home?” called Avi one Sunday as I left to cook dinner at Tali’s apartment. “If you want to, call. Do not walk home on your own, just call and I will come meet you” he added.

Once I reached the apartment I found Tali taking a much more composed perspective on the Sela sensation, marveling at how it took an escaped rapist to bring issues of a woman’s place in society or the safety of the city streets into the public eye, “It is ridiculous, it is as though there is no danger any other time. I mean think how many people like him are probably out on the streets anyway, all the time!” she said. As we stood, chopping and stirring the telephone rang. It was Tali’s brother Eyal, calling to tell her not to answer the door to anyone, to take extra care and to make sure she took an alternative route home from work. “Look, why would he be wandering up Sheinkin? (nearby street in south central Tel Aviv)...if he dares come to this door he will get such a big bash on the head from me he will not know what has hit him!...Natalie’s going to take a taxi home...Look we are here together, we will be fine...okay....okay...” I caught her saying between cooking and pauses in conversation.

Such sudden displays of brotherly and manly “overprotection” as Tali put it, were met with a wry smile by more than just my own circle of acquaintances; “Here we are, on a mass hunting expedition, like in movies about small-town America, seeking to protect our women from a corrupt and drunken sheriff” mused Tom Segev in Ha’aretz, leaving the reader to decide if it was Sela or the “shameful ineptitude” of the police “sheriff” one needed protection from (Tom Segev haaretz.com 01.12.2006).

So the fears over personal safety, while not as hysterical as some reports would have it, certainly resonated with lived realities. All the talk, gossip, chat and comments

revealed popular distress over about police (in)competence and profound anxieties over a state which not only could not defend its citizens from external rocket fire but could not even provide protection from home-grown criminals like Benny Sela. A state so ineffective and inept that a convicted and incarcerated criminal could slip through the authorities' fingers to frighten the populace all over again. Stories of unprecedented regime incompetence and citizen vulnerability animated public discussions for days.

It may be that the Sela episode simply provided people with a fresh topic for gossip and debate with their familiar conversational partners – like my neighbours at the kiosk – or in more fleeting exchanges with strangers they were unlikely to see again. But, like Lisa Wedeen's Yemeni informants discussing the event and its popular communication during the “murders in the morgue” scandal (Wedeen 2003), communication technologies such as internet “talkbacks”, print media and public posters combined with social practices such as pinning up satirical cartoons, kiosk conversations and joke-telling, to produce public discussion both about the escape itself and the realization that other people were also discussing the same event: people talked about Sela's escape and its circulation (see Wedeen 2003: 698).

Lisa Wedeen draws attention to the ways in which following the shocking “murders in the morgue” episode Yemenis critiqued the incapacity and immorality of the state, bringing a sense of commonality, community or nation-ness to bear on their experience in the very absence of a stable and effective state authority (Wedeen 2003). In May 2000 a Sudanese mortuary technician was arrested for the killing and mutilation of numerous female university students, a story that expanded to encompass regime officials thought to be complicit in the trading of victims' body parts and provoked critical comment on the moral laxity of the Yemeni state (Wedeen 2003). The university was criticized for allowing such a grisly event to happen, members of the faculty of medicine were embroiled in the organ trading scandal and people wondered how such a shocking crime could happen in Yemen of all places. In the hype and scandal, the stories, debates and critical discussions surrounding the serial killing Wedeen suggests that a kind of temporary popular

sovereignty or popular national community crystallized and came into being. It was through the collective lamentations and critiques, longings about the inadequacy of the state taking place between friends, acquaintances and strangers all over Yemen that citizens located a sense of commonality and entitlement as a people (Wedeen 2003). “Nation-ness” she suggests, “might be constituted in the absence of a sovereign state, through the shared experiences of belonging to a community imagined in the breach of institutional authority” (Wedeen 2003: 706-707).

In Tel Aviv people talked about the posters calling citizens to help in the search and others offering a reward for Sela’s capture, about friends and acquaintances calling to make sure people - especially women - kept their doors locked and stayed safe, and about the comments and opinions of broadcasters on the previous night’s TV. Citizens shared in communities of critique not only with friends, neighbours and people they knew but were aware that all over town and the entire country strangers, acquaintances and anonymous others were having similar conversations and holding forth with similar criticisms about this sensational event and the incapacity of their state, wondering how such a humiliating and chaotic escapade could happen in Israel and criticizing the regime for failing to act as an effective and protective state authority. All the publicity and public critique surrounding Sela’s escape showed the fragility and fabrication of state security at the same time as it conjured the desire for Tilly’s first, comforting sense of protection.

Massive manhunt

With Sela seemingly running rings around an entire police force, the episode provoked severe critique and even took on comic proportions, the critiques coming out in humour and jokes on the internet, in newspaper cartoons, around the coffee kiosk, and in passing conversation. Benny Sela became public enemy number one and a household name, slipping into jokes and chit-chat, even popping up as a bogus personal add on an online dating service, all at the expense of the ever-blundering police. “I think he’s found Benny Sela!” grinned Hadar, an internet installer and

passionate civil guard, as Mango, our geriatric canine mascot, had a good dig in our civil guard station yard. At the kiosk in the *gina* Barak teased me, “Did you lift weights yesterday? Did you? Making sure you are prepared for Benny Sela?!”, poking fun at both my gym addiction at the time and the incompetent police. Even the papers got in on the act, raising Sela to superhero status, as humour and criticism went hand in hand, “Just listen to the way he is being talked about; it is reminiscent of the way the Americans spoke of Bonny and Clyde and Al Capone. Just as they did, Benny Sela is also laughing, fooling the cops and doing as he pleases. Another sensational headline tells us what we already know: the cops don’t have a clue. What can we say, he’s a real Batman” (Yonatan Yavin, ynetnews.com 01.12.2006).

Reports of an enormous “manhunt” (Luvitch, ynetnews.com 24.11.2006) and “thousands of police” on the case (haaretz.com 27.11.2006) was one thing, but still the authorities could not find that pesky Benny Sela. “Where’s the police?” asked ynet (ynetnews.com 01.12.2006), “Have they caught him yet?” laughed Avi as sat at his desk at home and logged on to the morning reports. People began to question just how clueless the authorities must be to allow a rapist to remain at large, “He has to eat, he has to sleep, how can they not find him?” asked my neighbour Barak during a Sela-centred kiosk conversation. And to marvel at how one man could outwit an entire police force, “Oh he is the biggest tembel!(idiot)”, declared Hadas, haranguing a cartoon image the beleaguered Chief of Police as she pinned up a strip showing Karadi and his police commanders resorting to *Google* as a Sela-search technique (figure 15).



Figure 15: haaretz.com editorial cartoon from Hadas’ kiosk

And all the while we saw policemen and policewomen patrolling the streets but displaying little in the way of dynamic urgency; relaxing in *Kikar Rabin* (Rabin Square) in front of the municipality and yards from the point of Sela's escape, eating falafel and snoozing in the shade (figure 16). Cartoons and photographs of these police officers "on patrol" appeared in the press. "I saw them, and the photo was all over the front page of Yedioth - the police, lying down, resting, sleeping, eating in Kikar Rabin!" cried an incredulous Hadas, irritated and amused by the apparent police apathy and misuse of some much needed manpower.



Figure 16: "I haven't enjoyed myself like this in ages" from Hadas' kiosk

Back at the *Mishmar Ezrachi* base maverick volunteer Hadar was in a frenzy of excitement, thrilled at the ineptitude of the "real" police investigators and convinced that he alone possessed the skills to seek out the elusive Sela. We arranged for me to join his civil guard patrol that Friday night. "Are you coming?" he asked our community commander, who had other more pressing civil guarding commitments to take care of. "Well don't be angry when I find Benny Sela!" taunted Hadar, strutting outside to light a cigarette. As it turned out he stood me up for that Friday shift, having (I assumed), decided that I would be more of a hindrance than a help. With my penchant for falling asleep in the back of the *nayedet* (patrol van) at three in the morning I was hardly the most alert volunteer or Sela-seeker of the bunch. "I

was busy with Benny Sela, I had to go!” he later confessed, but had no luck in tracking down the elusive escapee.

Needless to say people were more fearful of the sheer ineffectiveness and absurdity of their police force, running around the country like so many keystone cops on one hair-brained chase after another, than they were of an escaped and dangerous felon. A selection of sightings and bumbling police force chases appeared in the press and in daily conversation. In one case somebody reported seeing Sela on bike in fields around Ein Said and the police swarmed to the area but found nobody. In another someone spotted Sela on a motorcycle and police scoured Ramat Gan but found only a man with lapsed motor registration. In yet another sighting Sela was recognized in the Galilee and police swooped on the town of Tzfat only to accost the bewildered local beggar (Rebecca Anna Stoil, jpost.com 10.12.2006). And meanwhile the rapist remained on the loose. The tales of incapacity and ineptitude got worse and worse as the days went by, turning an already ridiculous investigation into a farce. “Theatre of absurd” ran one despairing ynet report (ynetnews.com 08.12.2006), whilst one Tel Avivian woman told Jerusalem Post journalists “I’m more frightened of an incompetent police force than of some escaped street scum!” (Haviv Rettig, jpost.com 27.11.2006).

The events and criticisms created a sense of community and the ideal of the protective state in and through the scathing critiques and cynical jokes. By commenting on what was wrong people simultaneously expressed hopes or expectations for how things should be, their desires built into their doubts. In critiquing the state’s protective incompetence citizens expressed a longing for a comforting and effective state that would not bring danger like the menacing racketeer but would prove capable of protecting them. The protective aspects of the state were reproduced and rebuilt in their very clear and critical absence.

Capture and incompetence

Finally, as I sat down for the usual TV news watching session initiated by Tali's Dad after Friday night dinner with the family, we tuned in to find Benny Sela had been captured while we ate. After two weeks at large the serial rapist was nabbed on the outskirts of the northern city of Nahariya after stealing a car, sneaking in to see distant relatives and stopping off at a kibbutz to ask for directions. In the end Nahariya residents spotted Sela and reported the rapist to the police. Reports of the chase and re-arrest by police who took Sela to be a Palestinian Arab car thief at first, interrupted our regular evening news and once his identity was confirmed we were treated to re-run after re-run of the same Sela news footage. We saw picture after picture of the police station in the dark, and inside images of Sela himself, held up to the flashing news cameras. Whilst the security ministers and police chiefs congratulated one another on a job well done the family scoffed at the media frenzy and the *chutzpah* of a police high command rushing north to be part of the triumphant final act. The question how dare they celebrate after such a disaster? set the general tone of television criticisms, as we watched his grinning captors, drank our coffee and ate our dessert.

As if the whole affair were not a fiasco enough the police now paraded their captive in front of the television cameras. Sela now appeared less an evil predator than pathetic prisoner. To citizens watching the "disgusting celebration" (Yoel Marcus, haaretz.com 12.12.2006) at home it was undignified, "humiliating" my neighbour Oren called it at the kiosk the next day and "not how it should be" according to Avi. "Top cops danced on the tables" screamed the mass-circulation Ma'ariv on Sunday, as the unsightly celebration turned decidedly sour (Marcus, ha'aretz.com 12.12.2006). "Exclusive: what police did to serial rapist" ran ynet's Sunday scoop, printing pictures of gloating detectives - who were later given a disciplinary hearing - grabbing Sela by the neck, placing hands on his head and forcibly tilting his face for the cameras (Raved, ynetnews.com 10.12.2006). The question was Sela "humiliated"? was on everyone's lips as the police looked not only inept but entirely inappropriate, spoiling the image of an already battered security-state. Citizens stood aghast at Sela's mistreatment, making comparisons with the capture of Saddam

Hussein or the photographs of Iraqi prisoners from Abu-Ghraib. Such criticisms conveyed a sense of morality and outrage at the actions of police and state officials. The regime could mobilize its security capabilities in retrospect but even then it was not done properly. Instead Israelis perceived a set of unscrupulous individuals celebrating a very hollow victory – the fiasco had been their fault after all – in indecorous and unseemly style.

Critiques in the rather embarrassing aftermath were predicated on a kind of “moral panic” tempered by humour at the ridiculousness of it all and a kind of wry disbelief at the sheer inappropriateness of the police. In her book about fear Joanna Bourke depicts moral panics as popular, widespread and disproportionate “flurries of fear” that grip an increasingly frightened and hostile population (Bourke 2005: 330-331). In the Sela case moral panic was less about wild panicking on the part of citizens although kiosk comments, cartoons, and news columns all displayed a kind of Sela hysteria, and more about the ways criticisms connected a sense of impropriety and immorality with the actions of people acting in the name of the state. What did this reveal about the state of the state? How could this happen in Israel? Moreover, popular critiques also revealed claims for an efficient and effective state apparatus and the subsequent protection it might afford.

With the scandal and sensation surrounding Sela’s escape, communities of critique at the kiosk, all over Tel Aviv and all over the country formed in the absence of a particular aspect of the state – its ability to protect and shield its citizens from danger. People criticized the regime for its bumbling ineptitude in letting Sela loose in the first place and its failure to act as an effective political authority in ensuring his swift recapture. Criticisms, satirical jokes and snide comments circulated, animating serious public debate, revealing security and protection as only so much illusion, reigniting a kind of committed criticism and reproducing claims for a state capable of protecting its citizens. Protection as such often lacks any sense of “real” infrastructure or institutions, but is reproduced as a kind of phenomenological reality, expectation and claim to entitlement through common communities of critique (Wedeen 2003).

Concluding remarks

The Sela episode illustrates how a sense and experience of security and protection inheres not only in the national events and military conflicts through which those of us outside the country so often apprehend Israel, but through the domestic dramas, the fiascos and disorder that takes place behind the belligerent voices and bombs of war. Communities of critique conversing and criticizing the shoddy handling of the Sela case revealed the real incapacities of the regime as well as the cynical disdain in which a state that had failed to destroy Hizbullah and protect its people during the summer was held by citizens shocked at its inability to recapture one dangerous man. The publicity surrounding the runaway rapist demonstrates the fragility and fabrication of state protection or security at the same time as it produced creative criticisms predicated on a cynical kind of moral panic and the desire for protection. Kiosk criticisms of the escape and ensuing chase reveal that many citizens want or feel entitled to sensible, capable state authorities and protection in Tilly's first comforting sense of the term. Events such as Sela's escape suggest that notions, illusions and hopes for security and protection may nevertheless arise in the very absence of sovereign protection through the shared experiences of critical communities created in the absence or incompetence of state security.

This chapter explored the fabrication, uncovering and recreation of state protection, the critiques and claims to security and a protective state following the escape of Benny Sela in the middle of Tel Aviv. The following concluding remarks to Part three seek to compare and contrast across the three episodes - war, scandal, Sela - in order to discuss the ways in which a sense of security and protection may be reproduced by people's shared experiences and everyday, creative, critical and committed actions in the world.

Part three: Concluding remarks

By way of conclusion let us begin with a brief summary of each episode. In July 2006 the Israeli regime responded to the kidnapping of two soldiers with air assaults on Hizbullah strongholds in southern Lebanon, belligerent speeches resurrecting the “no choice” rhetoric of wars gone by and pledges to restore security to northern communities. Hizbullah responded in kind with daily waves of rocket attacks on northern Israeli towns and threats to aim its missiles on Tel Aviv. Promises of a swift military resolution quickly evaporated into a summer-long “war” that was called anything - a conflict, an operation – but not a “war” by a government keen to avoid paying out war-related compensation to its citizens. Meanwhile poor or patriotic northerners were left to swelter in dilapidated, poorly equipped bomb shelters for weeks on end, while those able to flee southwards were obliged to rely on the kindness of friends, family and strangers for a roof over their heads. Affluent self-publicising businessman Arkadi Gaydamak filled the war-time welfare gap left by the un-protective state with his tent city for those refugees in need of shelter. On the military side the army called up hundreds of reservists, many of whom re-lived memories of war in Lebanon the first time round and who were wary of returning once again. Reduced training budgets, poor planning and a lack of supplies meant some soldiers were stranded without food, water or adequate equipment. All the while Israeli aircraft bombed south Lebanon and Beirut, and Hizbullah rockets rained into northern Israel.

At home in Tel Aviv communities of critique read papers, watched TV, discussed, debated and questioned their military and political leaders, their plans and protocols, as well as their ability to succeed. Day by day critical comments about how the war should be conducted, whether leaders knew what they were doing, which battle strategy was the best, the state of the shelters, the likelihood of Tel Aviv being attacked, anxieties about reservist brothers readying to fight and injured friends filled coffee kiosk conversations. And as the international community hammered out a ceasefire deal a last minute ground offensive failed to improve Israel’s flagging

military fortunes. In the end Hizbullah was by no means crushed, reigniting talk of next rounds and new conflicts. Israelis were left to lick their wartime wounds with citizens wondering why Israel had not won and when and where the next round would come from.

With the end of hostilities all the domestic political scandals that had been brewing for months finally broke out. It emerged that as soon as the soldiers were kidnapped the Chief of Staff took a break from emergency meetings to cash in his stock portfolio, seemingly putting personal wealth above national security. Ministers were accused of sexual misconduct and cash for appointments scandals. Corruption allegations continued to dog the Prime Minister, and the President stood accused of sexual harassment, blackmail and rape. Such stories were the stuff of public sensation and cynicism, animating conversations and debates around the kiosk.

Finally, a few months later a serial rapist escaped prison custody after more than a decade behind bars, using a cunning court-case ruse and giving police officers the slip en route to a non-existent court summons. Benny Sela disappeared into the very streets where a decade earlier he had terrorised Tel Aviv residents. The authorities launched a massive manhunt but Sela eluded all attempts at capture and as the days passed by the police looked more and more like bumbling fools rushing around the country from one reported sighting to another on a wild Sela chase. Cynical jokes and satirical jibes at the regime's expense began to circulate as citizens stood aghast at the incompetence of their own police force. When Sela was finally captured after two weeks of frantic and fumbling investigations he was forcibly held up to the cameras by a cadre of gloating police officers sparking a wave of public critique not only about the ineffectiveness but the impropriety of state authorities.

Each episode exposes ways in which conflict and security may be produced, experienced and lived out in the "everyday". Such seemingly spectacular events are mostly perceived and practised through peoples' rather ordinary actions in the world. Indeed, national conflict, political scandal and a criminal escape were all engaged with by my friends, neighbours and informants through conversations and arguments

while reading the paper or watching TV, through daily discussion and debates, and the lively local kiosk community of critique. Even when an event or conflict does erupt quite suddenly and spectacularly as it did with Hizbullah in July 2006, many people, most of the time, spend more hours watching the news and discussing developments than they do firing weapons and fighting. Security is played out not only by soldiers and citizens on the “frontlines”, along national borders or on battlefields and barricades, but by citizens mulling over events, sipping coffee, scanning the papers, getting into heated debates, discussing and critiquing on a daily basis.

It is through these critical “public spheres” that security unfolds and circulates, emerging and re-emerging in conversation and critique. I have used snippets of news and news-related conversations to convey the mundane medium or critical environment through which these dramatic events were experienced. Approaching incidents through the public sphere of people congregating at the kiosk or watching TV on the couch allows us to try and apprehend events as they did, perceiving, cogitating and critiquing the protective state. By taking a temporal approach, relating events as they happened and tacking back and forth between news materials and field notes, between national developments and neighbourhood discussions I have tried to draw the big picture out of the immediate circumstances, to pull security and insecurity out from the public sphere where it is perceived and practiced.

Viewing these episodes together enables us to explore some very different security events, from a national conflict to an escaped criminal, and glimpse some more general lessons about the ways in which conflicts and insecurities are experienced and played out. Each episode exposes how easily collective anxiety and critique may be brought about not by the scale or magnitude of the threat - war with an external enemy, political corruption, a rapist on the run - but by the perceived incapacity and protective impotence of the state (Wedeen 2003). Taken together the episodes suggest the events are not only experienced as separate crises of registers of security - national security and personal security or safety – but also as inextricable intertwined anxieties and anger surrounding the state’s effective and protective

capabilities. Thus profound anxieties surrounding security and protection may inhere in both conflict calamities and criminal chaos. As commentaries and critiques reveal it is not the threat that is at stake so much as the protective capacities of the state.

During the conflict with Hizbullah the regime failed to act as a shelter or shield; as Charles Tilly's first comforting kind of protector. Instead citizens were left vulnerable to rocket attacks, hiding in underground bunkers or forced to flee. Others were called up to fight or were left waiting and worrying about loved ones or wondering if the missiles might reach them. What is more the regime behaved like a criminal racket bringing violence and danger raining down across northern skies through its own belligerent "no choice" strategy. Yet unlike the racketeer the Israeli regime failed to provide security and protection at a price. The Israeli government went to "war" in order to provide protection and restore security, but in the end left citizens no safer or more secure than before battle commenced. In many ways the external dangers Israelis faced that summer were produced by the state and its own aggressive practices. Protection as Charles Tilly argues may be a "double-edged" commodity (Tilly 1985). Conflict critique was dominated with discussion of why Israel had not won, revealing the extent to which perceptions of "credible" protection may rest on effective outcomes rather than a sense of inherent righteousness or legitimate action. Precisely when the state was called upon to perform its protective duties it appeared as incapable or incompetent or even as the very cause of insecurity.

Stories of scandal and sordid sexual affairs only seemed to underline the rather ordinary expectation of corruption and dirty deals in political public life. Politicians were unveiled as unscrupulous racketeers, demanding payments and back-hand deals as the price of politics. Yet the state did not disintegrate under all these accusations. On the contrary, while citizens were shocked and stunned and appalled by many of the incidents, and there were calls for resignations and investigations, most of the corrupt characters remained in place for quite some time. It was a common, though unacceptable and sometimes shocking case of "*protectsia*"; a rather routine form of racketeering and a recurring theme in Israeli politics.

And with Sela's escape the state once again appeared as an incompetent racketeer, provoking danger by letting him loose and yet failing to protect citizens. The police were perceived as lazy and ineffective by turns as the fugitive evaded capture for a fortnight. Nevermind national security concerns, the regime was incapable of shielding citizens from one craven criminal.

The episodes are similar in that each shows how peoples' security perceptions, anxieties and concerns are not only about fear of an external or amorphous Arab enemy but fear of the enemy within. This internal enemy differs across spaces, people and episodes from the potentially ever-present unknown terrorist at the security check, to military incapacity, changing national values, political corruption and a dangerous criminal. But the fabrication, ineffectiveness and protective incapacities of the state flow throughout. In this sense Israel may not be all that different from other places when it comes to security practices and perceptions; the state constantly struggles to provide protection and security, whether through street-level security checks, or going to war, or trying to catch an escaped criminal, but in doing so it seems to produce even more insecurity.

The three events may show similar ways in which perceptions and anxieties surrounding security and credibility rest on the effectiveness and competency of state authorities and actions. But each episode is also different. One deals with a crisis of national security or conflict, one with political scandal and one with an internal security calamity. The conflict with Hizbullah reveals concerns over military capabilities and government incompetence when it comes to national security and conflict, commitments to defend one another and the nation-state, as well as internal anxieties about the values, safety and solidarity of the Jewish-Israeli population. The security threat is not so much Hizbullah as the protective incapacities of the state and the moral fibre or commitment of the population. Political scandal and the President's sexual scandal reveal concerns about the abilities and trustworthiness of political leaders but also a kind of normalisation surrounding political misdemeanours. The threat is not corrupt politicians but rather political incapacity.

Credibility rests not so much on scrupulous behaviour as the ability to get things done. With the escape of the rapist Benny Sela the security threat came in the form of an internal, domestic fiasco. The threat or the enemy within was not only to do with the criminal himself or with peoples' sense of safety and security on the streets of Tel Aviv, but also their faith in the protective competence of the Israeli police. All involved protective incapacities of some kind, criticisms and commitments engaged with, evoked and experienced through critical conversations and communities at the local coffee kiosk.

The clamour and critique surrounding events such as Sela's escape and "war" with Hizbullah dramatise the fragility and fabrication of state protection at the same time as it produces creative criticism predicated on a cynical yet sincere kind of commitment and the desire for protection in Tilly's first optimistic sense of the term. Such episodes suggest that a sense of security and protection may arise in the shared experiences of critical communities created in the very absence or incompetence of effective state authority (Wedeen 2003). It is a sense of security and protection reproduced by citizens' commitments and claims to entitlement, sometimes called upon to protect the state, sometimes hoping and doubting for a state capable of protecting them. Hope is always on the cusp of doubt and despair, doubt always on the cusp of hope. It is a complementary coupling through which citizens' critical commentaries simultaneously uncover and recreate the state's protective (in)capacities. Commitment to the ideal of a competent protective state may be coeval with passionate critique. It is in this turning tension between hope and doubt that anxiety arises and through which the protective state is revealed and reproduced. The protective and effective state endures. It is regenerated within and after every critical deconstruction and discussion or cynical revelation. Hopes and doubts and commitments for protection keep it up.

Postscript

Tali's brother Eyal returned home safely from reserve duty on the Lebanese border.

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz resigned in January 2007 following harsh criticism from public and senior military officials over his flawed management of the conflict.

Israel's Chief of Police Moshe Karadi quit in February 2007 amid a separate scandal involving an alleged corrupt murder investigation back in 1999.

In March 2007 the summer 2006 conflict with Hizbullah was finally officially named a war. According to Israel's Ministerial Committee for Symbols and Ceremonies the conflict is now called the Second Lebanon War.

The Winograd commission released their full and final official report into the conduct of the 33-day conflict with Hizbullah in January 2008. The report laid the majority of the blame on Israel's military but also held the political echelon responsible for its much criticised eleventh-hour ground incursion. "Overall we regard the Second Lebanon War as a serious missed opportunity. Israel initiated a long war which ended without its clear military victory" was the commission's verdict (Zino and Sofer ynetnews.com 30.01.2008).

The bodies of soldiers Goldwasser and Regev were finally returned to Israel in coffins in July 2008, just over two years after they were kidnapped in the cross-border raid that sparked the conflict on July 12th 2006. Their return came following negotiations with Hizbullah and in exchange for the release of 5 Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails.

Despite riding out the post-conflict corruption scandals and the Winograd report, on July 30th 2008 Prime Minister Ehud Olmert tendered his resignation from office under a cloud of criminal investigations. One involved accusations of taking bribes from an American business tycoon and the other charged Olmert with submitting duplicate travel expenses claims during his previous political positions as trade minister and Jerusalem mayor.

After a leave of absence President Moshe Katsav resigned on July 1st 2007. Following a run of legal attempts to charge and impeach the President Moshe Katsav's lawyers finally reached a plea bargain with Israel's Attorney General in June 2007. According to the deal Katsav could plead guilty to several counts of sexual harassment and indecent acts in order to receive a suspended jail sentence and a demand to pay compensation to two of his victims. The more serious charge of rape would be dropped. In October 2007 the State Prosecution changed its mind after contradictions in complainants' testimonies came to light. And in April 2008 following advice from his lawyers Katsav scrapped the plea bargain, convinced that the prosecution no longer had enough evidence to convict him. However, in March 2009 Katsav was finally indicted for rape and sexual harassment offences by a Tel Aviv court.

Benny Sela is still behind bars.

Chapter eight: conclusion

This section concludes by returning to reflect on the three main themes explored and developed through the thesis: security may produce insecurity, security is mundane and ordinary, security as practice and emotion. It points to contributions towards security studies and anthropology of conflict and violence.

Security practices that are often invoked as a precaution against danger and provider of protection may paradoxically produce a sense of even more danger, uncertainty and insecurity. On the streets of Tel Aviv security staff stand at the entrances and edges to public space and place searching and surveiling for bodily signs of suspicion. Such practices are ostensibly aimed at managing risk, making people legible, predicting, pre-empting and preventing danger or a suicide attack. However, rather than making citizens and suspects legible and known, security may be experienced, unsettled and undone by the illegibility of its own practices, documents and deeds. As security staff slip betwixt and between specific signs of suspicion and more abstract concepts of someone “strange” or “not normal”, between ideas about anybody and Arab bodies, *bitachon* becomes about an embodied, racialized and uncertain notion of danger. For in a context of intimate relations and indistinguishable populations, where the suspect is always potentially present and yet often invisible, signs of danger, suspicion and race cannot easily be read off bodies. Indeed, *bitachon* may make reading off bodies even more opaque, uncertain and unclear. Security practices may produce a sense of insecurity and unease. As people pass through the checks, criticise, moan and sometimes keep an eye on one another security emerges as an interaction and engagement between security staff and citizens and the negotiation of an uncertain kind of suspicious citizenship. *Bitachon* is less “about” security than the playing out and reproduction of ethno-nationalist uncertainties and insecurities in everyday interactions. It may often be hardly noticed or entirely “normal” and “necessary” to those Jewish-Israeli citizens for whom it is designed to go unnoticed and protect. Security is one example of practices and

spaces where the exclusive and inclusive claims and proclivities of the Jewish-Israeli ethno-nation become unstuck, uncertain and unstable.

In addition, although security may be about claims to protect citizens and the nation-state from external enemies and strategic threats it may also be about anxieties surrounding the enemy within – whether ethno-nationalist contradictions or the incapacities of the un-protective state. Indeed the state may perpetuate and provoke the very threats, dangers and insecurities against which it claims to protect. As rockets rain down on northern towns, refugees flee south and military strategies fail, the government appears incompetent, unable or unwilling to provide shelter and protect its citizens. Precisely when the state is called on to perform its protective responsibilities it appears incapable or even as the very cause of insecurity. As stories of political corruption and sexual scandal hit the news headlines leaders are revealed not as scrupulous, protective statesmen but as untrustworthy, scurrilous racketeers (Tilly 1985, Wedeen 2003). And as a rapist escapes custody and evades capture the police produce rather than prevent danger through their own apparent incompetence and inability to provide security and protection. As such, collective anxieties and insecurities may be brought about not by the scale or magnitude of security threats but by the perceived incapacity and protective impotence of the state.

Security is not only about spectacular conflicts or strategic concepts but is also engaged with and experienced through mundane and ordinary social life. As people sit at the neighbourhood kiosk, sip coffee, critique and converse, debate and discuss national security threats (conflict with Hizbullah) or local security dangers (a rapist loose in the middle of town) security also emerges as a kind of phenomenological reality and a feeling recreated and lived out over coffee and cigarettes through ordinary criticisms, concerns and commitments. As people move through the city and go about their daily business they open up their bags and bodies to the suspicions of the security check. Such street level security checks have become normalised, expected, regular and routine, boring and banal. Margins of uncertainty and boundaries of belonging that permeate the mundane activities of “normal” daily life – arriving at the office, entering a particular café, or shopping mall – flow through

the body of the state and the bodies of its citizens. Such security is not extraordinary but exists as the flurries of anticipation and activity, as the holding tension between boredom and attention, the absence and the presence of potential violence. It opens up the mundane practices in and through which violence and conflict may be anticipated as potentiality, possibility and perhaps.

As well as claiming to protect the nation-state, military actions or managing strategic threats, security is also a kind of practice and emotion; an atmosphere, activity and a feeling. Such feelings include anxiety, hope, doubt, pleasure, commitment and fear. Security is also a job and a particular set of practices and procedures; senses and signs of suspicion, ways of sniffing out *SHaBa*”*CHim*, spotting suspects, reading behaviour off bodies and feelings of pleasure in one’s own security expertise. It is felt in day to day activities, interactions and suspicions at the security check. In the emotional and temporal experience of security as a kind of waiting, anticipating and becoming bored. Security is sticky, slow and ponderous waiting time, feelings of being blocked or stuck in *bitachon*, as well as the alert attention and anticipation of security staff on the lookout for danger. It is the enjoyment and laughter of playing games and passing the time. It is anxieties about particular bodies, demographics and the Jewish status of the nation-state. Security circulates and is felt as perpetual striving, feelings of commonality, care and commitment, of citizens sometimes called upon to protect the state, sometimes hoping and doubting for a state capable of protection. In fears for those called up to fight, or caught up in conflict. It is felt and made fun of in cynical jokes about political scandal or protective incompetence. It emerges in the normalisation and nonchalance surrounding security checks and worries about one’s own safety on the city streets. It arises in the frustrated feelings of people waiting in security line, civil guards’ desires for “action”, heated debate and critical conversations at the kiosk. Security is also a feeling, experienced, produced and played out in ordinary actions, anticipations and anxieties.

Critical security studies with their focus on security as social construction, rather than rationalist realist strategic concepts, open up the opportunity for social anthropology to enter into such security dialogue. Yet notions and examinations of

securitization, elite constructions, or emergency measures tend to remain at the level of analytical concepts and tells us little about the actual stuff and sociality of security, neglecting people and their own practices, productions, insecurities and fears. This thesis has attempted to explore security as it is lived by Jewish-Israelis going about their lives in Tel Aviv and opening up their practices, perceptions and feeling of security for ethnographic analysis. It is in this social and emotional life of security as lived experience that anthropology can contribute to security conversation and critical studies. For security practice in Tel Aviv for example, cannot be fully understood without the sights, smells, sounds and suspicious signs of the security check, or the cigarette smoke, cynical comments and critical conversations at the neighbourhood café kiosk.

Anthropology, in contexts of conflict and combat often focuses on violent action, the moment of violence or its memory and how victims cope with violence endured in its aftermath. Such studies tend to analytically construct the everyday or ordinary as a kind of safe and secure category or background against which extraordinary and spectacular violent events take place (Kelly 2008, Spencer 2000). There is a danger that violence and conflict are framed as an extraordinary rupture in the fabric of otherwise stable ordinary life. As this thesis has sought to argue and explore, what is missing from such accounts are the mundane and ordinary ways in which most people apprehend and act within contexts of conflict or through which most conflict is lived. It focuses the analytical and anthropological lens on the anticipatory moments and security practices through which protracted conflict may be awaited, normalised and lived out. The ordinariness of “normal” street-level security checks or critical conversations at the local kiosk does not stand in opposition to violence as the two may be inextricably intertwined (Das 2007). It is these ordinary practices and contexts – the very mundane matters of social anthropology and security – often overlooked or pushed into the background of anthropological analyses that this thesis has tried to highlight, explore and add to studies of conflict and violence. For we must look to the mundane pre-emptive practices and defences against danger, normalised street-level security practices, or the “abnormalities” of “normal” security practices (Navaro-Yashin 2003), security sociality, inclusion and consensus, peoples’

hopes, doubts, criticisms and commitments to and for security and protection, ordinary activities and feelings, if security, violence and conflict are to be more fully engaged with and understood.

This thesis has argued particular kinds of security subjectivities, uncertainties and anxieties surrounding the boundaries of belonging and dangerous others, citizenship and the state, may be revealed in ordinary practice. Such subjectivities and uncertainties are found in passing comments, signs of suspicion and pastimes at security checks, in waiting and anticipating and becoming bored, in citizens consenting to security procedures, in critical commentaries made during neighbourly news debates and in popular desires for and commitments to state protection. Security practices and perceptions in Israel and in situations and spaces elsewhere may not be just “about” security at all.

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